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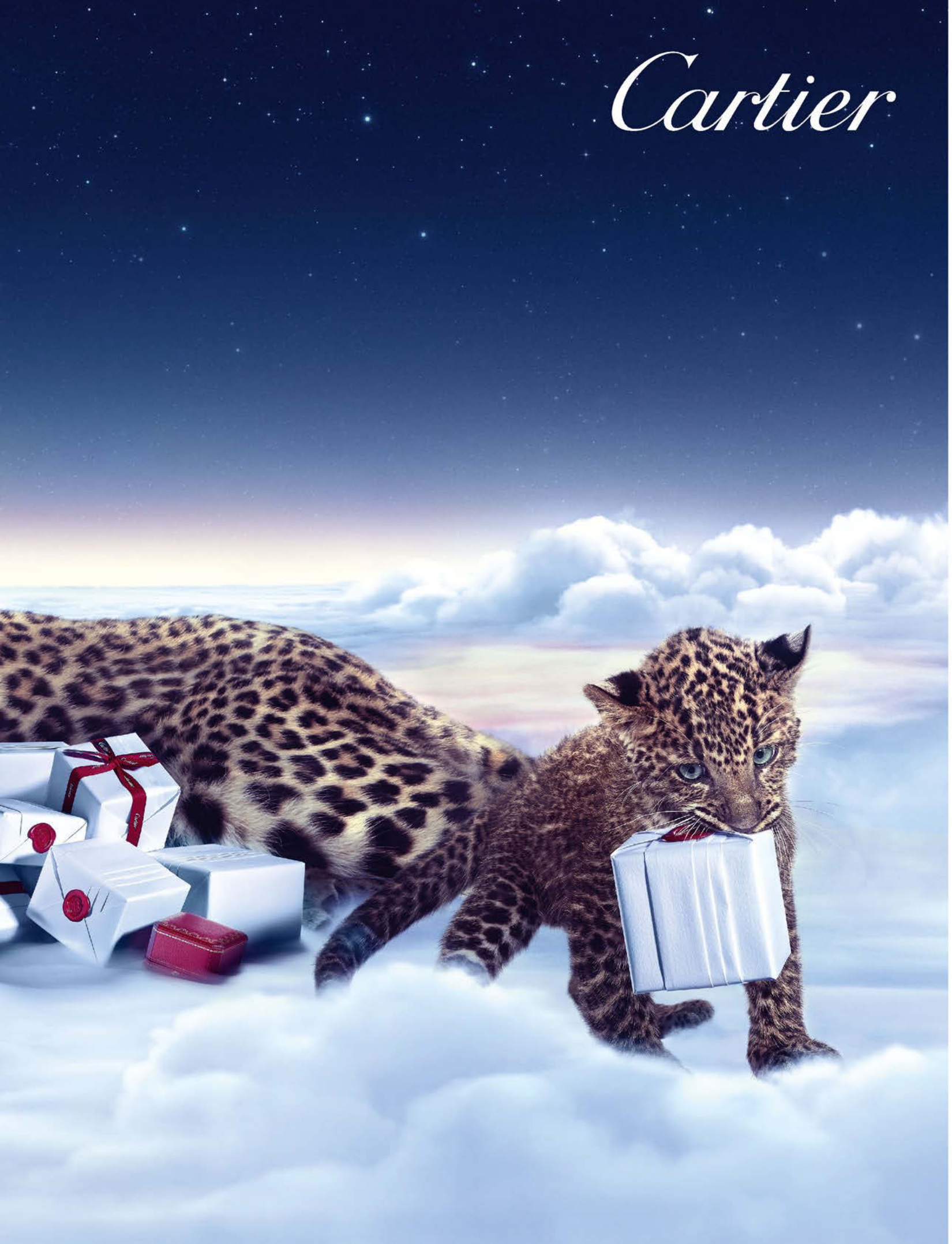
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COVER: FELICITY JONES

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PHILIP GAY
STYLED BY DEEP KAILEY

Felicity Jones wears faux-leather bustier dress, £2,475, by Lanvin. Platinum and diamond earrings, POA, by Harry Winston. For stockists, see Address Book. Hair by Leigh Keates at Premier Hair and Makeup, using Shu Uemura Art of Hair: Texture Wave and Touch of Gloss. Make-up by Mary Greenwell at Premier Hair and Makeup, using Chanel S 2015 and Hydra Beauty Skincare: Hydra Beauty Micro Serum, Vitalumière Loose Powder Foundation SPF 15, Joues Contraste in Angélique 190, Rouge Allure in Badine 154 Le Sourcil de Chanel Perfect Brows, Les 4 Ombres in Tissé Fantaisie 236

PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP GAY, RADU BREBENE

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ON TATLER.COM THIS MONTH

- A gallery of gorgeous photographs of Felicity Jones. You lucky devils.
- How to bag an heirless aristo. Top tips from Sir Benjamin Slade.
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Van Cleef & Arpels

Haute Joaillerie, place Vendôme since 1906

CELIA THURSFIELD

Tatler's supplements editorial coordinator keeps our Travel Guide on track

What's your favourite joke? 'What did the duck say when she bought some lipstick? Put it on my bill.'
What's your signature dance move? Disappointingly, twerking.
What would be your death-row meal? Shedloads of Mr Kipling Bakewell slices. I can have about 20 in one sitting.
What's the best chat-up line you've ever heard? 'Is your second name Jacobs? Because you're a cracker.'

CONTRIBUTORS

What's on their minds this month?

FELICITY McCABE

Felicity photographs Britain's smartest cook (page 57)

What's your earliest memory? Falling into a paddling pool fully clothed.
What's your go-to fancy dress costume? I've got many – Dolly Parton, Joan Collins, a horse, disco disaster on roller skates...
What's your signature dance move? The moonwalk.
What's the best chat-up line you've ever heard? 'You'll do.'

JAMES DELINGPOLE

James explains why hunting is the new high (page 128)

What's your worst habit? Being right all the time, about everything.
Which super-power would you most like to have? To be the Jammy Bastard: outrageously lucky in gambling and near-death pursuits like war and fox hunting.
What's your go-to fancy-dress costume? Do people actually DO fancy dress? ▷

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JOHN BOOTH

John drew (yes, *drew*) the clothes for this month's fashion shoot (page 110)

What's your worst habit?
Procrastination.
What's your earliest memory?
Getting into big trouble for cutting all my sister's hair off.
What would be your death-row meal? A table full of puddings.
What's the best chat-up line you've ever heard?
I never get chatted up.

CONTRIBUTORS

What's on their minds this month?

MATTHEW PARRIS

Matthew on why you need to go to Zimbabwe NOW (Travel Guide)

What would be your death-row meal? A crispy bacon sandwich with melted Stilton.
What's the best chat-up line you've ever heard?
'Just give me 20 minutes to explain away my face.'
What's your signature dance move? A lunge for the exit.

JEAN FAULKNER

Condé Nast's marketing director ensures our readers are happy

What's your favourite joke?
'If you hear a good vegetable joke, please lettuce know.'
What's your signature dance move? Riverdance – Irish blood will out.
What would be your death-row meal? My mother's apple pie.
What's the best chat-up line you've ever heard? 'Would you like my Cadbury Creme Egg?' □

PHOTOGRAPH: WILL SANDERS

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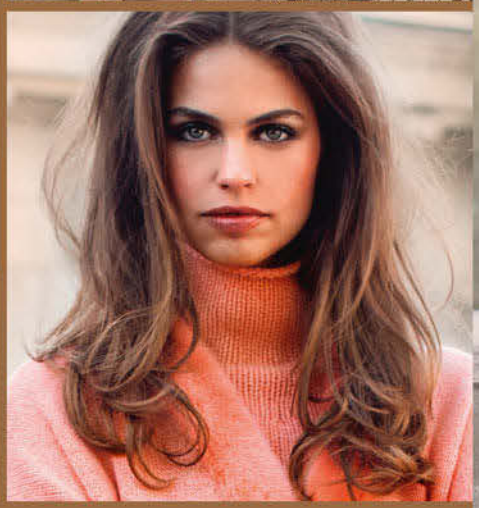

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TATLER FASHION

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HERE'S LOOKING AT... LAUREN SANTO DOMINGO

Who would you like to be if you weren't you? What about Lauren Santo Domingo? The 38-year-old New Yorker is a contributing editor at American *Vogue*, wife to billionaire Colombian beer heir Andrés Santo Domingo, mother of two beautiful children, lives in a Gramercy Park townhouse, has better legs than Elle Macpherson, and is co-chair of the Met Gala and founder of Moda Operandi, a fashion website where you can pre-order straight off the catwalk. See what we mean? And now you can be her... kind of. You can enter her world and buy clothes that she has personally selected and might even have touched with her own hands. For LSD (as she is universally known) is opening her first London shopping salon, housed in an old stables in a Belgravia mews, decked out in Fragonard pinks and blues by Fran Hickman, and open only to MO's private clients. What are you waiting for? ***Luciana Bellini***

To make an appointment at the London shopping salon, ring Moda Operandi on 020 7235 9153.

LAUREN SANTO DOMINGO WEARS SILK DRESS, £3,900, BY EMILIA WICKSTEAD. FOR STOCKISTS, SEE ADDRESS BOOK. HAIR & MAKE-UP BY NICKY TAVILLA AT TERRI MANDUCA, USING GIORGIO ARMANI COSMETICS & BUMBLE AND BUMBLE. STYLED BY SOPHIE GOODWIN

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CARA DELEVINGNE IN BURBERRY

SUKI WATERHOUSE IN BURBERRY

KATE MOSS IN KATE MOSS FOR TOPSHOP

PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES, REX FEATURES

DON'T YOU WISH YOU'D WORN THAT? TROUSER SUITS

The spectre of mid-Seventies Bianca Jagger presides over the trouser suit, braless and avenging, in a 'None shalt ever wear a trouser suit quite as well as I did back in the day!' way. So, yes, it's hard. Entry-level trouser-suitage is 'Le Smoking'. Then there is the one-button, slinky finish, almost pyjama, pretending to be cosy while actually being deeply predatory. Did I just flash a tit? Oops, sorry (not really). Beyond this, the main problem is avoiding looking depressingly practical, as if you chose your outfit for boring reasons like the fact that it keeps your legs warm and you only have to iron the very front panel of your shirt. This is why flats will never do, and you must always have at least one juicy cleavage showing, be it toe or breast, to counteract the inevitable whiff of the photocopier. ***GH***

ALEXA CHUNG IN CHRISTOPHER KANE

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PIN-UP
'And this is me as a humbug...'

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Stripes

Stripes used to be all about conformity. Prisoners, sailors, the Duchess of Cambridge... all required to wear a uniform of thin, identical lines so that they, and we, were never able to forget the constraints of their position. But the 'new stripe' is a maverick, a rule-breaker. The colours are wild and acidic, as if a Breton farmer has dropped his first tab of LSD and suddenly his navy-and-white world has gone all *Magic Roundabout*. The stripes can be anything – thin, fat, both at the same time, horizontal, vertical, who gives a damn, this is FUN. It's like your most serious, demure friend suddenly revealing that she was a free-loving anarchist all along. ***GH***

STILL-LIFES: JODY TODD. PHOTOGRAPH: EMMA SUMMERTON/TRUNK ARCHIVE

BOODLES

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SWIMSUIT, £415, BY **ROKSANDA**, AT **AVENUE 32**

BIKINI TOP, £60, BY **MILLY**

BIKINI BOTTOM, £60, BY **MILLY**

SWIMSUIT, £110, BY **PAUL SMITH**

BIKINI SET, £335, BY **DOLCE & GABBANA**

BIKINI SET, £148, BY **NIKKI DE MARCHI**

SWIMSUIT, £520, BY **FENDI**

BIKINI SET, £195, BY **MICHAEL KORS**

PIN-UP
Pandora's plans for world domination were nearly complete

BIKINI TOP, £85, BY **HEIDI KLEIN**

BIKINI BOTTOM, £85, BY **HEIDI KLEIN**

BIKINI TOP, £94, BY **PAOLITA**, AT **MATCHES FASHION.COM**

BIKINI BOTTOM, £80, BY **PAOLITA**, AT **MATCHES FASHION.COM**

SWIMSUIT, £220, BY **STELLA McCARTNEY**

BIKINI SET, £200, BY **LOUIS VUITTON**

SWIMSUIT, £340, BY **MISSONI**, AT **NET-A-PORTER**

SWIMSUIT, £203, BY **WE ARE HANDSOME**

SWIMSUIT, £229, BY **ZIMMERMANN**

Swimwear

It is weird, when you think about it, that wearing a bikini is like wearing your bra and pants in front of loads of people you don't know. A swimming costume isn't much better. Which is why you need power patterns. The pattern's power to distract and hypnotise has long been known: think of Bridget Riley, Islamic tiles and those freaky Magic Eye prints. Now, swimwear designers have discovered this ancient wizardry. Tell the beach barman that if he stares really hard at your bikini top, an image of a puppy will emerge. It doesn't matter if it's not true. You might be nearly naked in public, but suddenly you're in control. ***GH***

STILL-LIFES: JODY TODD. PHOTOGRAPH: ESPERANZA MOYA/FOLIO-ID

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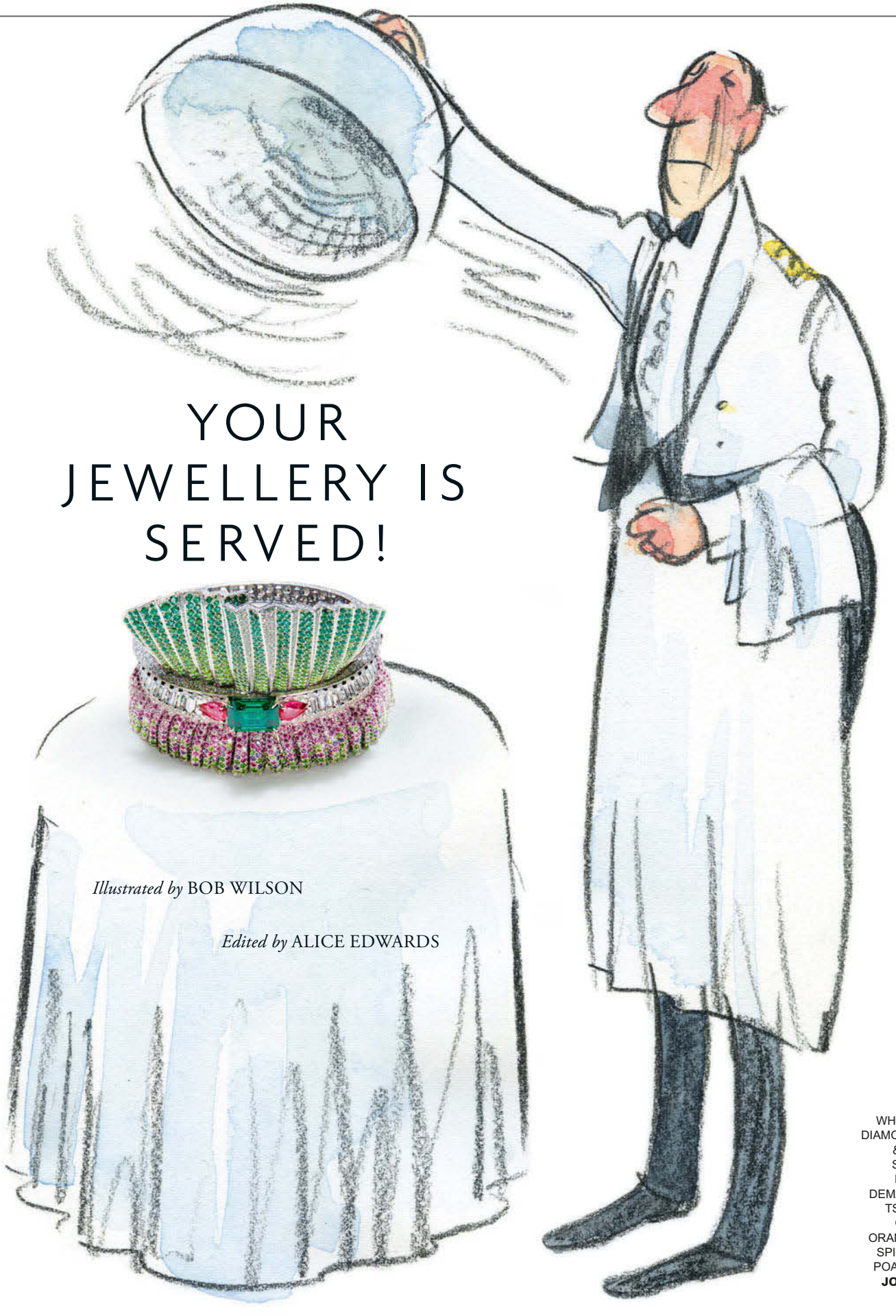

WHITE-GOLD, DIAMOND, PINK- & PURPLE-SAPPHIRE, EMERALD, DEMANTOID- & TSAVORITE-GARNET & ORANGE-PINK-SPINEL CUFF, POA, BY **DIOR JOAILLERIE**

FOR STOCKIST, SEE ADDRESS BOOK. PHOTOGRAPH: PIXELEYES PHOTOGRAPHY

YOUR SECRET'S SAFE WITH US

There are several things that will make you obsessed with this Amulette pendant, £9,600. First, it's made of gold, diamonds and onyx. Second, it's lucky. Third, it's shaped like a padlock, to lock in your secret wishes. Fourth, it's by **Cartier**. Now do you get what we're on about? *cartier.com*

Hold on to your knickers, everyone – we have news. Tory Burch, as in THE Tory Burch, is launching a new watch range. And guess what – we're so excited we're having a party to mark the occasion. It's on Wednesday 10 December, and tickets are £25. Everyone who comes will get a £100 goodie bag. PAR-TAY! Go to tatlertoryburch.eventbrite.co.uk to grab one of 50 tickets while you can.

FRENCH TWIST

How we adore a juicy collaboration. Today, It List groupies, we are mostly celebrating the coming together of designer Jeremy Scott and French luxury-giant **Longchamp**. As you will see, the super-famous Longchamp Le Pliage has been given a marvellously wacky makeover, which will no doubt sell out in seconds. £200. *longchamp.com*

POWDER PIONEER

If you've been telling people that skiing is not your jam, you need to pipe down, because this new skiwear range from **Fendi** is going to radically change your mind. Fall off the ski lift, get drunk on too much *vin chaud* – just do it looking sensational in this black jacket. £2,110. *matchesfashion.com*

UTTERLY BUTTERLY

Clean, simple lines plus a slick, classic design and leather so buttery you'll want to spread it on your toast and then eat it with a lovely cup of tea and maybe a biscuit afterwards. That's what you're in store for with this **Valextra** clutch, £910. Don't actually eat it, though. It's a bag. *net-a-porter.com*

TRACK RECORD

Sportswear ain't what it used to be. It must now segue effortlessly from the gym to lunch to the school run. THAT's how smart and accommodating it must be, as this range from **Laain** will testify. Shaming tracksuit bottoms are over. Do not get caught out. Mixed knit striped leggings, £180. *net-a-porter.com*

NIGHT MOVES

The whole point of sleeping is not having to do anything. Unless you are this **La Prairie** Cellular Radiance Night Cream, £430, which works like a demon to smooth out wrinkles and fade pigmentation from dusk till dawn. *harrods.com*

HOT MIX

Begone, separate eyeliner, shadow and brow definer. We much prefer you in one neat package, like this Brow Maestro pot, £26.50, by **Armani**. *harrods.com*

GIFT FROM THE GODS

The handbags you already own are going to stop speaking to you. That is because you are about to bring a supreme being into their midst. Make way for **Ralph Lauren**'s drawstring bag in crocodile, £5,400. Bow down before it. *ralphlauren.co.uk*

It List

by MARIELLA TANDY

FACE IT

When something keeps winning award after award after award, one really ought to sit up and take notice. This Radiance Face Oil, £30, from **Balance Me** is proving to be an unstoppable force, so get aboard the bandwagon and find out for yourself what all the fuss is about. *balanceme.co.uk*

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

When you've had a row with your diamonds and you want to wear something else, go for these **Carat London** emerald-cut studs, £146. They look like the real deal, but... shhh... they're not. No one need ever know. *caratlondon.com*

SO GOOD IT HURTS

You know that thing when you see something and you jerk your neck in a double take because it's so good-looking – like Bradley Cooper randomly walking down your road or, even better, this **Coach** bag? Well, that sensation is called whiplash – and so is this leather bag, £515. Because that's the kind of storm it's going to create when it hits the streets. *coach.com*

Somewhere over the rainbow, they have trainers that are still really cool but also a bit smart – maybe made out of suede, because that would be nice. WAIT! What's that, Coloquy – these trainers, £250, actually exist? Because YOU make them? And in lots of different colours? Dreams really do come true. coloquy.com

STEP RIGHT BACK...

Sit up and pay attention, those of you who love one-off vintage pieces of jewellery. This coral ring, £5,000, from the **William & Son** vintage collection is made with white diamonds set in yellow gold. Buy it, put it on, flash it about a bit and know that you will never meet its twin. You have to admit, that is pretty tempting, isn't it? *williamandson.com*

WRAPPER'S DELIGHT

If there's one way **Jaeger** really knows how to smash the competition, it's with coats. Like this caramel double-faced wool wrap baby, £399, for instance. Their recent revamp is looking pretty good from here. *jaeger.co.uk*

DOUBLE UP

If there were such a thing as a dream team for eyes, this **Aurelia** twosome would be it. The roller contains a delicate serum to get down into the skin, while the nourishing cream kicks any wrinkles into touch. It's known as probiotic technology – and it's marvellous. Eye Revitalising Duo, £90. *aureliaskincare.com*

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About Town

Styled by SOPHIE GOODWIN

Photographed by FELICITY McCABE

THE PRIVATE CHEF

The thing about throwing a dinner party is that it's a bore. All that panicky cooking – when what you really want to be doing is drinking champagne, eating glossy olives and telling wild anecdotes. Enter Emily. Lovely, quiet, calm Emily Few Brown, a private chef with the no-nonsense air of a prep-school matron and the kitchen prowess of Elizabeth David. Throwing a casual 12-course dinner in your Notting Hill dining room? Give Emily a bell and she'll arrive, usher you out of the way and crack on with the menu – venison, green beans and almonds, perhaps. 'I'm big on seasonal,' she says.

She's 24 and has a terribly smart following. There's 'Euge', or Princess Eugenie, who books Emily for dinners at her London flat, and she's often called upon by 'Cress' – Cressida – and the rest of the Bonas clan. Last year, she was flown to Zermatt to prepare an engagement breakfast for Jamie Murray Wells and Lottie Fry. Bryan Ferry's a fan too. 'He likes simple things – salmon or chicken. You have to ask him if you're going to put a herb on *anything*.'

It wasn't always going to be cooking. After school at Marlborough, Emily thought about going into sport (her Andover-based family are so into football that her brother Freddie's middle name is Tottenham) but she settled on food after a one-month course in Somerset.

She lives in Battersea, where her cooking business Spook ('a play on "bespoke"') is based. And she has impeccable manners. As a thank-you for each job, she sends every client salted caramel brownies afterwards. Irresistible. ***Sophia Money-Coutts***

EMILY FEW BROWN WEARS SILK & COTTON SKIRT, £1,210; SILK TOP, £535, BOTH BY ROKSANDA, AT HARVEY NICHOLS. FOR STOCKISTS, SEE ADDRESS BOOK. HAIR & MAKE-UP BY ANNA GIBSON, USING GIORGIO ARMANI COSMETICS & SKINCARE. FASHION ASSISTANT, MEGAN BOYES

WHERE'S MY HEIR?

Do you dream of living like a lord in your own castle? Dream no more. Just make friends with one of these heirless wonders and you could inherit the lot. By Sophia Money-Coutts

The list of creatures that face extinction is long and exotic, including tigers, black-footed ferrets and the pygmy elephant of Borneo. Unsurprisingly, British aristocrats are not on the list, and yet several key examples could be on their way out too.

The Earl of Norbury, for example, is at risk because he has no male heir. Nor does the Earl of Lovelace. A handful of viscounts are similarly imperilled. Viscounts Craigavon, Gough and Simon are all lacking heirs. Then there is a gaggle of nervous barons – including the former Greenpeace director Lord Melchett and the Tory peer and Everton shareholder Lord Lyell – and several baronets who face brutal obsolescence.

'Looking back as far as 2000, I would say there are between two and three hereditary titles that become extinct every year,' says Charles Kidd, the editor of *Debrett's Peerage & Baronetage*. Don't panic immediately. At that rate, it will take around 300 years for all titled British aristocrats to become extinct. But were they to go the way of dinosaurs and letter writing, then Britain would risk becoming like Continental Europe, where bloody revolutions snuffed out the upper classes and titles are now made up.

One of the most vocal chaps on the topic of heirlessness is Sir Benjamin Slade, 68, who lives in a 13th-century manor house in Somerset and, when he tires of that, nips four miles across his 2,000-acre estate to his other property, a pale-pink castle called Woodlands. Although he was married for 12 years and has had several girlfriends since then, the longed-for heir has never materialised and Sir Benjamin has taken the practical step of freezing his sperm. 'I did it several years ago – it's in the only bank that didn't go bust in the recession! Ha ha!' he says.

Today, he is 'totally single but interviewing a lot', although his list of requirements narrows the field down somewhat. 'She needs to have a shotgun licence. She can't be Scottish, and a little bit of illegal accountancy work would be useful, as would a bit of capital. Or a large fortune. And it would probably help if she's bred before. They've got to be breeders – and after 35, their fertility goes down.' It is, of course, entirely possible that Sir Benjamin has failed to persuade anyone to have children with him because he refers to women as 'breeders', but who are we to judge? Position vacant.

'This family line going back to Agincourt will finish'

If he doesn't succeed in spawning an heir, there is a chance that the estate (although not the title) could be left to a distant relative in Canada or America – according to Sir Benjamin, there are 3,500 Slades in the States alone – 'but it's a question of finding someone suitable'.

Otherwise, Sir Benjamin's illustrious family tree (featuring a brigadier who danced with Marie Antoinette and a daughter who ran away to become a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi) faces the same fate as the Portland dukedom, which petered out in 1990 when the ninth duke died without an heir. 'I don't think he minded very much about children to be honest,' says an old friend. When the 10th Duke of Newcastle, an expert lepidopterist, died in 1988, that dukedom also expired. As did the Earldom of Sondes when the fifth and last earl died in 1996. 'Henry was a colourful character – he was kicked out of Eton for organising gambling rings,' says his American widow, the Countess Sondes, who now runs the 7,000-acre Lees Court estate, in Kent. 'He had no reason not to have children, but he had a tough childhood, so...' She won't be drawn on who will inherit the estate (although the earldom itself is gone), but promises that it is 'secure'.

The British inheritance system can be so arcane and complicated, however, that even when there is some kind of heir, things may not be that straightforward.

'Do you know the difference between an heir apparent and an heir presumptive?' barks Lord Monson, a 59-year-old investment consultant whose only son, Alexander, died tragically in Kenya in 2012 at the age of 28. 'I had a son, and he was my heir apparent. Nothing was going to stop him inheriting the title and so on. But then he died, so now my brother is the heir presumptive.'

In other words, an heir apparent is always first in line and can only be elbowed out of that position by death. An heir presumptive might be an uncle or a cousin who inherits when an estate has to pass to someone other than a direct descendant but who could be shoved down the pecking order if another heir apparent was born.

Monson – the 12th Baron Monson – says passing his title to his brother would break the direct line of his family, so he is campaigning for women to be able to inherit titles – in which case, the barony would go to his 28-year-old daughter, Isabella.

'My son is gone, and, as the law stands, this family line is going to finish – and it's a line that goes back to Agincourt,' CONTINUED ON PAGE 159

HEIR-FREE ARISTOS

Viscount Craigavon, 70
A spectacularly charming crossbench peer.

The Earl of Clancarty, 62
Artist, writer and keen Twitterer.

Earl Attlee, 58
Clem's mustachioed grandson.

Lord Lyell, 75
Seduce him with your knowledge of Everton FC.

The Marquess of Abergavenny, 54
Gave Julian Assange sanctuary for a time on his estate in Kent.

Sir Benjamin Slade, 68
Has not given up hope, having frozen his sperm.

PHOTOGRAPHS: DOMINIC O'NEILL, GETTY IMAGES, ALPHA PRESS, NICHOLAS TRENCH/TWITTER, KENT AND SUSSEX COURIER

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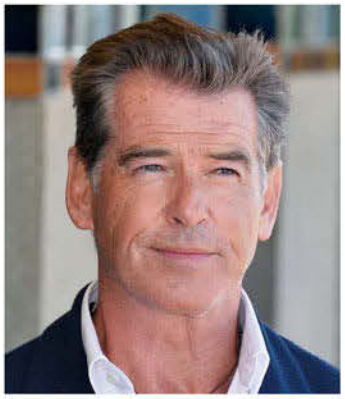
GILFS

Herewith, for your viewing pleasure, a laboriously handpicked selection of hot and handsome grandparents we'd really like to have a lot of fun with. IYKWIM...

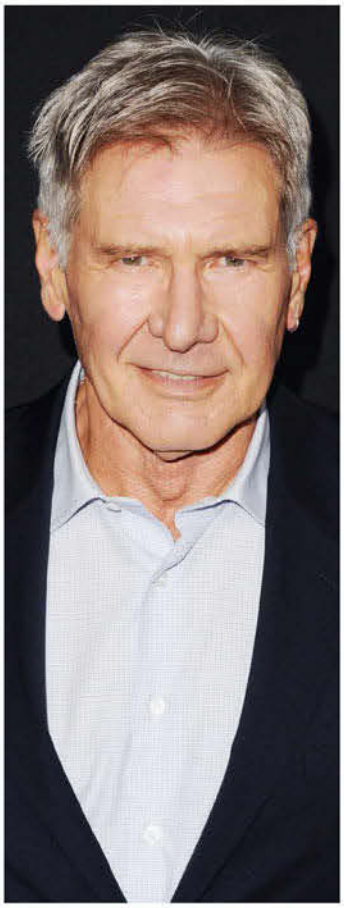
SILVER-TONGUED GILF
CHARLES DELEVINGNE



IRISH GILF
PIERCE BROSNAN

VALENTINE GILF
TOM CONTI

DO-IT-TO-ME-NOW GILF
CHARLES DANCE

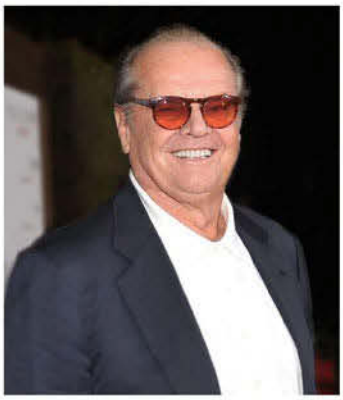


WHIP GILF
HARRISON FORD

POSH GILF
THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER

OMNIPOTENT GILF
MICHAEL BLOOMBERG

JOLLY GOOD GILF
ANDREW PARKER BOWLES



DEVILISH GILF
JACK NICHOLSON

MASTERFUL GILF
DAVID DIMBLEBY

PHOTOGRAPHS: CAMERA PRESS, REX FEATURES, FAMOUS, GETTY IMAGES, ALPHA PRESS, ALAN DAVIDSON, DOMINIC O'NEILL

REGAL GILF PRINCESS MICHAEL OF KENT

BLONDE GILF
VANESSA CALTHORPE

FIT GILF
CAROLE MIDDLETON

ORGANIC GILF
JO WOOD

HUSKY GILF
SARAH STANDING

BRAZILIAN GILF
ANDREA DELLAL

IT GILF
LADY MARY-GAYE CURZON

ARTISTIC GILF
SOPHIE BRUDENELL-BRUCE

EURO GILF CAROLINE, PRINCESS OF HANOVER

ROCK GILF
JADE JAGGER

PHOTOGRAPH: NAOMI YANG

MY SCEPTRE'S BIGGER THAN YOURS...

It is a little-known fact that Europe's eight ruling families are deeply competitive about who has the swankiest palaces, the shiniest diamonds and the biggest bank balance. Matthew Bell surveys the field*

It has always been an expensive business, being a royal. There are wars to fight, castles to build, daughters to marry off and pageants to perform, not to mention the small matter of ruling your people. In the past, funding wasn't a problem, thanks to feudal systems, which forced everyone to chip in. Wealth meant power, and nobody wanted a frugal king. Quite the opposite: it was your duty to show off and intimidate rival nations.

But now that monarchs have lost their actual power, life is much more complicated. Gone are the days of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, when Henry VIII and François I of France met near Calais to see who had the most magnificent loot. These days, subjects are not impressed by swagger but by economy. They want to know what everything costs. That's the problem with a democracy. In the Middle East, no one asks a prince if he really needs another Gulfstream G550 jet. In Europe, though, life for the eight remaining royal families is a tightrope walk of keeping up appearances while providing value for money. They are expected to look shiny and regal and good on a postcard, but nobody wants to pay for them, especially not the minor members.

So what's a modern royal to do? They can't get a job. Think of poor Sophie Wessex, trying to earn her keep in PR after marrying Prince Edward, only to be shot down with accusations that she was cashing in on her royal status. Your best bet is to dedicate yourself to charitable work, while making as much money as you can on the side. This might be through buying and selling property, or making the most of what you've inherited. The good news is that the really expensive business of ruling – the wars, the lawmaking, the courts – has been offloaded to the government. Your vast and costly palaces can be paid for if you let the public have a look round now and again. Even wedding costs can be covered, if you don't mind selling them to *Hello!* All that's left to pay for is the fun stuff – the holidays, fast cars and yachts.

Prince Hans-Adam II and Princess Marie of Liechtenstein

Vaduz Castle in Liechtenstein, home of Prince Hans-Adam II

RICHEST

Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein – which is a tiny sliver of mountain between Switzerland and Austria – has cleverly amassed a family fortune of £4.7bn and a personal one of £2.5bn, thanks to his shrewd head for business and a sound education in finance. When his father, Prince Franz-Joseph II, sent him to university in 1965, he insisted that Hans-Adam study business, not archaeology, because it would be much more useful when he came to running the country, albeit one with only 36,000 subjects. It paid off, as did a stint of work experience at Hambros bank in London. When Hans-Adam took over running the family businesses in the Seventies, he shut down the loss-making branches and concentrated on their ailing bank, the Liechtenstein Global Trust (LGT), which he has since built up into a global behemoth. His father had been keeping the show going by selling off land and art, but Hans-Adam, 69, saw the potential of the bank, and LGT is now the largest family-owned private wealth-management business in Europe. His other lucrative interests include a share in Rice-Tec, a Texas company that develops hybrid rice. All these enterprises help fund his many homes and his extensive art collection. Ten years ago, he handed over the running of the country to the eldest of his four children, Hereditary Prince Alois, 46, though Hans-Adam remains the legal head of state and keeps his hands firmly on the purse strings.

POOREST

The reason the Norwegian royal family is so poor is primarily because the current dynasty has only been in place since 1905, when Norway gained independence from Sweden. The 77-year-old King Harald V, who acceded on the death of his father in 1991, once said his inheritance amounted to only two figures in millions of Norwegian kroner, the equivalent of no more than £10m. As anyone who has ever had lunch in Oslo will know, £10m doesn't get you very far. Still, they struggle ▷

Norway's royal yacht, KS *Norge*

King Harald V and Queen Sonja of Norway

THE ROYAL LOWDOWN

Most staff

The Queen has 1,200.

Biggest castle

The Palacio Real de Madrid has more than 2,800 rooms covering 1.5m square feet. It is only used for state ceremonies; the family lives in the more modest Zarzuela Palace.

Biggest yacht

King Harald V's 262ft KS *Norge* narrowly beats Margrethe II of Denmark's 256ft *Dannebrog*. Both ▷

PHOTOGRAPHS: SEAN GALLUP/WIREIMAGE, STUART DEE/GETTY IMAGES, JULIAN PARKER/UK PRESS/GETTY IMAGES, AP PHOTO/MICHAEL PROBST

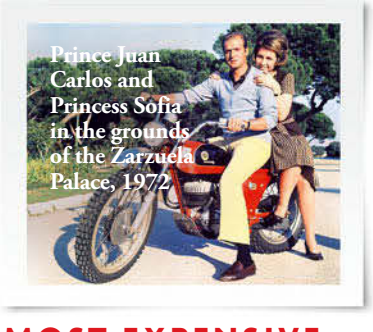
**OK, so we don't know this for a fact, but we like to imagine that it is true, and it is human nature, after all...*

◁ on, grateful for the extravagances of their predecessors: there's a royal train, a Thirties Cadillac for state occasions and a royal yacht, built in 1937 and bought in 1947 by Harald's father, who immediately issued a royal decree stating that it should be manned, operated and maintained by the nation's defence forces. This represents a nifty saving for the royal family, who spend much of their time between May and October bobbing about the fjords in the vessel's wood-panelled splendour. They keep a more frugal image on land, driving around in a simple Lexus most of the time.

King Felipe VI of Spain shortly after his coronation in Madrid

MOST CARS

The Spanish royal family receive the smallest civil list in Europe, but under Juan Carlos I, who abdicated last June, they were famously extravagant. The former king has always had a weakness for fast cars, powerbikes and luxury holidays. Summers would be spent aboard the *Fortuna*, his 134ft bulletproof yacht, while winters were for skiing in the Pyrenees. He is said to have owned 70 vehicles, including a Rolls-Royce Phantom IV that once belonged to General Franco.



Prince Juan Carlos and Princess Sofia in the grounds of the Zarzuela Palace, 1972

MOST EXPENSIVE

Ours cost £35m a year, almost six times the cost of the Spanish royals, who get by on £6m a year.

◁ were built in the Thirties and are all teak decks and creamy white walls.

Fewest homes

Eighty-year-old Albert II of Belgium has two homes: the Palais Royal in Brussels and the 18th-century Château de Laeken. He prefers to relax on his 88ft, £4.6m black yacht, the *Alpa*. He abdicated last year in favour of his son, Philippe, a less flamboyant character.

Most extravagant wedding

The wedding of the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer remains the world's most expensive – it cost £30m (about £50m in today's money). This mainly went on security, but touches like the 27 wedding cakes and having 10,000 pearls sown into the dress helped rack up the costs.

Prince Constantijn and Princess Laurentien with King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of the Netherlands in the Hague

MOST FINANCIALLY OPEN

The Dutch royal family might be the second most expensive to run after our own royals, costing some £31m a year. But the clever thing about their financial position is that they keep it in the open – the Netherlands has one of the most transparent royal accounting systems of all. State payments are given to just four members of the royal family: the monarch and his or her spouse, plus the heir and his or her spouse. They each receive a personal salary of over £5.5m a year. According to Peter Conradi's *The Great Survivors: How Monarchy Made It Into the 21st Century*, this mainly pays for staff – some 260 flunkies divided between their three palaces. And as it happens, they are also privately rich, having a £620m stake in Royal Dutch Shell.

Belgium's royal family: *standing*, Princess Claire, Prince Laurent, Queen Fabiola, Queen Mathilde, King Philippe, Albert II, Queen Paola, Princess Astrid, Prince Lorenz; *seated*, Princess Elisabeth, Prince Gabriel, Princess Eleonore, Prince Emmanuel

MOST FINANCIALLY SECRETIVE

The Belgian royals are extravagant, expensive and opaque in their finances. Ever since the reign of Leopold II, who founded the Donation Royale, it has been impossible to know how much money they have accumulated. At his death in 1909, Leopold gave his entire fortune to the foundation, not wanting his three daughters, all married to foreign princes, to get it. The Donation's huge holdings in land and buildings are still available for use by today's monarch, and no one knows quite how rich it is. The monarch is under no obligation to explain how he spends his annual £8.9m civil-list payment. As Belgian academic Herman Mattijs says: 'He is completely free to do what he wants with the money. There is no control system... not from the government or from parliament.' And if that means buying a yacht, as Albert II did in 2009, that's what he'll jolly well do. □

Most expensive jewels

Our Crown Jewels are the most precious in the world but have never been valued. The Norwegian crown jewels include his-and-hers sceptres.

Most palaces

Sweden has 11 royal palaces, including the 1,430-room Royal Palace in Stockholm and the Versailles-inspired Drottningholm Palace.

Most generous

The Prince of Wales is arguably the biggest charitable giver – the Prince's Trust spends £30m a year.

Most valuable art

Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein's art collection includes works by Rubens, van Dyck and Raphael.

Most spendthrift royal in history

George IV was so extravagant that he was known as the 'Prince of Pleasure' before becoming king. He spent his whole life in debt and once bought 83 pairs of boots and 74 pairs of gloves in a single shopping expedition.

Most frugal royal ever

George VI had black lines painted into all the bathtubs at Buckingham Palace during the war to make sure no one took more than their allocated five inches of hot water.

PHOTOGRAPHS: EPA/EMILIO NARANJO, REGINALD DAVIS/REX FEATURES, STAR STOCK/ROBIN UTRECHT, ISOPIX/REX FEATURES

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Notes to self

Oh, the joy of temporary tattoos – show how hard and cool you are WITHOUT looking like a twerp in 10 years' time! By Sophia Money-Coutts and Ailsa Miller

Have you always longed for a tattoo but never dared go through with it? Not the full Cheryl Fernandez-Versini, obvs, but perhaps a star on the inside of your wrist, or your initials in Chinese characters, would look cool, a bit bad, a bit edgy? You always wimp out, though, because you worry about what it will look like when you're 80. And what happens if in 10 years' time Chinese characters go the way of the dolphin and aren't cool any more? Then what?

Except now you can be a bit bad without worrying about waking up and finding yourself indelibly dated. Welcome to the wonder that is Tattly. A group of young artists from New York (you see, we told you this was cool) have been assembled in a large loft apartment (we think) and instructed to spend every spare moment designing temporary tattoos. Their creations are, naturally, wild and witty – pipe-smoking rabbits, millipedes, cheese graters – and this mighty hipster hive brain is constantly coming up with new concepts.

These are then dispatched to Tattly subscribers, in batches of 10, once a month. It's pain- and consequence-free. But why did no one tell Cheryl? That was just mean.

SETS, FROM £3; SUBSCRIPTION, £25 FOR THREE MONTHS, AT **TATTLY.COM**

Try to cross the Finnish line in one piece, ladies. By Emma Kennedy

Oh hello there. You look lovely. Have you lost weight? Do you see what I am doing, dearest reader? I'm turning on the charm, because this month the gift I'm giving you brings the risk of pain, discomfort and gross humiliation. Ladies, I give you Wife Carrying – an actual thing they do in Finland.

'Whoa there, Kennedy,' you cry. 'What about those of us who are only ENGAGED?' Be quiet and pay attention.

For Wife Carrying you will need: one man, who may or may not be your husband; a belt (very much for him); and a helmet (very much for you). You now need to mount your gentleman. NO, NOT LIKE THAT. There are three acceptable positions:

1. Piggyback.
2. Fireman's carry.
3. Estonian-style (you hang upside down on his back with your legs round his shoulders).

Next, your fella has to carry you 253.5m across obstacles (including a 1m-deep water obstacle) whilst racing another couple. The winner is the first over the line, although points will be given for fabulous costumes. Official rules dictate that all contestants MUST enjoy themselves, so don't be coming with any gripes or whining. Moaning means instant disqualification, so if you find yourself face first in a sweaty crotch or bum crack, hush your beak – nobody's interested.

Think of it as the gaming equivalent of the Kama Sutra or a very twisted gymkhana. All aboard!

PHOTOGRAPHS: JODY TODD, REX FEATURES

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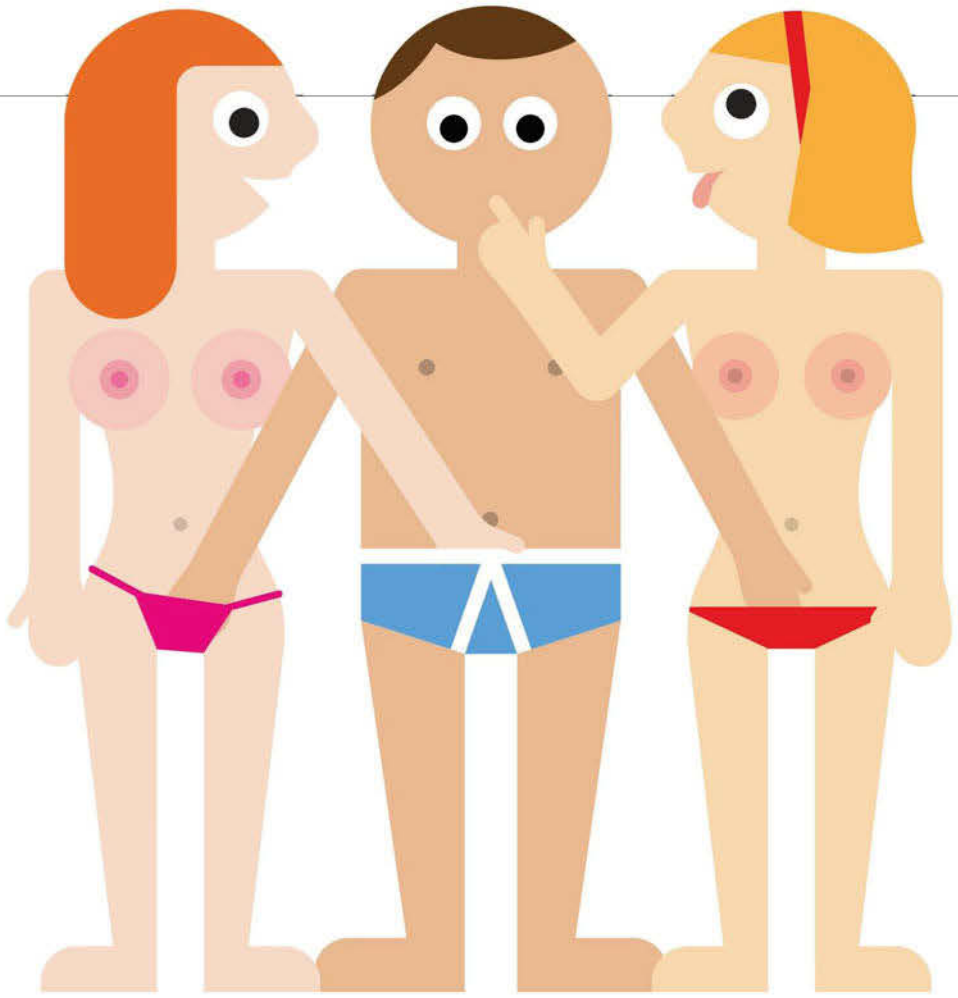


THE ETIQUETTE OF THE THREESOME

More may be merrier, but group sex isn't a free-for-all. As with everything in Tatler World, there are rules. By Sophia Money-Coutts

'Threesomes are always surprisingly noisy,' explains a young lady with experience in this particular field. 'Which can be a bit off-putting at first, but then you get used to it.'

Noisy?

'You know, bits slapping against other bits. In a threesome there are more bits than usual. And the moaning! There's lots of moaning because people feel like they should do it like they've seen in a film.'

It is a useful insight, and timely, because the threesome is enjoying a glorious resurgence. In fact, one is probably happening near you right now, particularly if you live in Dorset, which, our extensive researches have revealed, is quite literally a hotbed of threesome fun. Of course, we are not so naive as to imagine that three-way frolics haven't been going on since we were wearing revealing fur pelts and rollicking around on cave floors, but the Twentyteen vogue for more-harder-faster does seem to have resulted in increased naughtiness and boundary-pushing. Plus, in this age of the self-confessional and the selfie, people are just more willing to spill. Threesomes may have been happening before; we were just less likely to know about them.

So, chances are, whoever you are and wherever you live, you've thought about it. And then you've thought: 'Who with? How do I ask them? Who starts? And isn't kissing one person while fiddling with another person like trying to pat your head while rubbing your tummy?'

Stop right there. You cannot be uptight about a threesome. It is not a military manoeuvre. The key is spontaneity. You might have tumbled into bed with two friends after a birthday party because you were too drunk to go home, and then hands wandered. You might have been on a villa holiday in Capri and found it impossible to pick between two fellow guests. You might even have kicked off proceedings as a pair and then kindly invited the third person into the fray when they accidentally stumbled into the room looking for their coat.

In sex, as in life, generosity and manners are important – particularly in a threesome. It's like talking to people on either side of you at a dinner party; you must share your attention equally and not allow anyone to feel left out. A successful threesome is where everyone has, ahem, arrived, at least once, although it doesn't have to be together.

Much depends on the threesome's constituent parts. If you are the sole man with two women, and one of them is your girlfriend, do not spend

Illustrated by STEPHEN CHEETHAM

too much time on the other woman's breasts because they're a novelty. If you are the sole woman with two men, make sure you have an energy drink to hand. Or you may be one of three men or three women, in which case crack on and we applaud your equal-opportunities policy. The threesome is, above all, terrifically inclusive. 'I loved the fact that we were all giving mutual handjobs,' says an Old Marlburian who recently ended up in a threesome with another woman and a mutual male friend at a country dinner party. 'It was hysterical.'

So, too, are the names of several key threesome positions: Bobbing for Apples, for example, or Daisy Chain, or Doggie Bowl. They sound like a laugh, don't they? Because that's ultimately what the threesome should be all about.

A HIGHLY SCIENTIFIC SURVEY OF THREESOMES

22% of *Tatler* readers have had a threesome.

The average length of a threesome is 1 hour 19 minutes.

88% of people felt 'left out' at some point during a threesome.

Own a spaniel? You are the most likely of all dog owners to have had a threesome, followed by Jack Russell owners. Black Labrador owners are the least likely to have had a threesome.

64% of threesomes happen in the country.

WHERE TO HEAD FOR A THREESOME

GOOD PLACES

Ibiza
Practically mandatory.

School reunion
Everyone's feeling so nostalgic and carefree.

Dorset shooting weekends
Nature, red in tooth and claw, and all that.

Fancy-dress parties
Inhibitions are generally lower. Masked balls are especially good. Animal onesies go down well in Gloucestershire.

Wedding receptions
Scrutinise the table plan, locate the singles table, enlist your recruits and occupy that monotonous gap between church and dinner.

BAD PLACES

The car
Very few cars are roomy enough for threesomes without risking the kind of bruises that raise questions.

Yachting holidays
Yes, you're feeling all windswept and bouncy, but if it all goes wrong, how do you escape?

Scottish house parties
Too cold to be naked.

And finally...
ANY gathering at which more than two members of your family will be present.

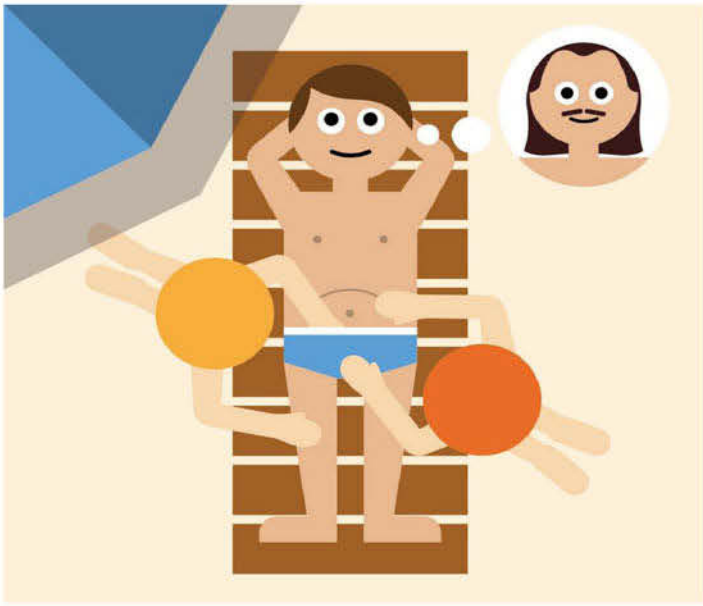
THREE – NOT AS MUCH FUN AS IT SOUNDS

For a moment, I felt like the Ron Jeremy of Eton. There I was, propped up on a sunlounger, hands behind my head, while two hot girls grappled to open my Vilbrequins. Could this really be happening? I was seeing double, but we'd only had three ouzos each. So I did the maths: one of me, two of them, four breasts – yup, this was a result. Woof! I am the emperor!

But then something happened. Instead of diving in, they started snogging. Each other. Oh yes, I thought, we're all flexisexual now. But hang on, one of them was supposed to be my girlfriend. So we took it upstairs, the three of us, and for a while things seemed to pick up. There was undressing, grinding and I didn't even mind getting a toe in my eye.

After a while, I felt an aching in my jaw. But while I was busy down there, I had this feeling the real fun was up there. No matter what I did, they only had hands for each other, and soon I was left fondling from the sidelines. I'm not the sensitive sort, but even I know when my gropes aren't welcome. It was like being an extra on a film set, all dressed up with nowhere to go. Not sexy. Quite lonely-making, in fact.

I remember noticing a copy of *Horse & Hound* and thinking their dressage report seemed quite interesting. That was the moment I knew this wasn't for me. I turned to the dressage and left them to it; they didn't even notice. So don't be fooled into thinking more is always better. When it comes to sex, one's fine, two is better, but three? It's the loneliest number. ***Mungo Bean*** ▷



THE BEST THREESOMES IN FILM

AMERICAN PSYCHO
It's hard to tell whether Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) is more into himself or the two female prostitutes in this scene, because he largely spends it flexing his biceps and looking at himself in the mirror while listening to Phil Collins.

SHAME
Michael Fassbender plays a sex addict pumping his way through this Steve McQueen film. The soft-focus threesome scene – featuring him and two women – goes on for several minutes, with nipples, tongues and buttocks all over the place.

WILD THINGS
Matt Dillon plays a particularly wayward high-school teacher who slowly peels Denise Richards's white knickers off while Neve Campbell pours champagne over her bare breasts. 'Never let the sun go down on an argument,' he tells them. A classic.

ZOOLANDER
'I think we should get naked,' says Owen Wilson. So he, Ben Stiller and Christine Taylor do just that to twanging porn-groove music. There are a few Maoris and dwarfs thrown in there, but the main focus is on the central players.

HOW TO STOP YOUR HUSBAND ASKING FOR ONE

If you're bored of him banging on about having a threesome with your most gorgeous friend, just try this:

'What a great idea! Do you think handsome Hector would be up for it? I've always had such a crush on him...'

TWELVE RULES FOR THREESOMES

1 Grooming: same rules as ever, but the stakes have been doubled. Such an embarrassment if you're the only one who's let yourself down.

2 Make sure you are tidy inside and out, as it were. You don't want to have to ring *two* people afterwards to tell them to make an appointment at the clinic, do you?

3 If you are at someone's house and fancy a threesome, you must invite the host first. It's incredibly rude not to.

4 Suddenly too chicken? You can ONLY back out if everyone's still fully clothed. You can't wait until you can see the goods on offer and then scarper. That's poor form.

5 Don't feel obliged to hang about afterwards. Threesomes are the only time it is acceptable – in fact, positively advisable – to get up and leave without a post-sex cuddle. You're even allowed a quick shower.

6 When you next bump into the participants – at a party, for example – look them in the eye, kiss them on both cheeks (face cheeks, mind) and act insouciant. This is just so normal for you, right?

7 If you are grown-up enough to do a threesome, you must be grown-up enough to face any consequences if word gets out. Be proud. You are instantly a more interesting dinner guest.

8 A threesome involves three people; a foursome is a Scottish reel. Do not get confused at the Royal Caledonian Ball. Five and beyond is an orgy.

9 If you're in a relationship, pick your moment to raise the topic. Within the first six months is good, before things get too serious. After that, try asking for one as part of a Christmas or birthday present.

10 If you need help finding willing participants, there is always the threesome app 3nderapp.com.

11 Don't allow it to happen more than once with the same people, otherwise it becomes a thing.

12 Don't mistake a threesome for romance. □

Quentin Letts

ON JIM MURPHY

The skinny on the slim, soft-spoken potential future Labour leader

THE first thing you notice about Jim Murphy is how slender he is – film-star skinny. Then there is his head, shaped like a nodding-donkey oil well, and the softness of his voice, whispery and old-fashioned. He would have made a good hypnotist: 'Look into my eyes, you're feeling sleepy.' It is surely possible to observe, without being too chauvinistically English, that some Glaswegian accents could double as sandpaper. Yet Jim Murphy purrs a Glaswegian of eiderdown softness. His larynx makes noises no centrist-minded English voter could regard as threatening.

Such things matter in electoral politics and it may explain how Murphy, as a 29-year-old 'no-hoper' candidate for Labour, won the old Tory seat of Eastwood in the suburbs of southern Glasgow. The fact that he first stood for election in 1997, the year of Tony Blair's landslide, also had something to do with it.

Murphy's views remain Blairish, moderate, polite. The Labour party has recently done a bad impression of an angry drunk lurching leftwards. Trim Jim is one of few Blairites urging his comrades to think about swing votes in the centre ground.

Lefties (suspicious of him) cannot accuse Murphy of being posh. Dad was a Glasgow pipefitter, Mum a school dinner lady. Money was tight and the Murphys, including a great-grandmother, a granny, mum and dad, Jim and his wee brother, squeezed into a two-bedroom council home. Jim's bed at first was a drawer.

It was not a political household. The family's proudest possession was a Caxton Encyclopedia set, and the boys were reared with a working-class pride in the value of knowledge – this at a time when Labour ideologues were destroying grammar schools. In 1979, when work was short, the Murphys emigrated to South Africa, where dad had landed a well-paid job. Murphy thus spent his adolescent years under apartheid – privileged in some sense (being white), yet fast recoiling from the injustice of colour discrimination. When he reached 18, he returned to Britain to avoid being conscripted into the South African army.

He did not fancy all that biltong, perhaps, but more to the point, he did not wish to shoot innocent blacks. He began reading law and politics at Strathclyde University.

Not long afterwards, in 1987, Margaret Thatcher won her third general election. Murphy was indignant at Mrs T's tolerance of apartheid South Africa and that was enough to get him involved in the Labour party. In the early Nineties he was active in the National Union of Students and later he worked for an insurance company, but there were a couple of years when he existed on benefits. He has never forgotten what a depressing experience that was.

Some politicians, with that background, would turn right and wish to undo welfarism. Jim Murphy opted for the moderate left, perhaps because he is a naturally altruistic softie, perhaps because the only party to join in Scotland, if you fancied a safe career in politics, was at that point Labour. Even so, he had little expectation of winning his seat in 1997. He went to the count, heard the result and almost toppled off the stage with surprise. It should be noted that he is a teetotal marathon runner and a vegetarian too. No deep-fried saveloys after a night on the heavy for this son of Caledonia, thank ye.

From 2008, he was in Gordon Brown's cabinet as Scotland secretary. When Labour went into opposition, he struggled to maintain his place on the slippery pole, having been a big shot in David Miliband's leadership campaign team. Ed Mil' regards Murphy with wariness.

And there, possibly, it could have ended. But during the Scots independence referendum campaign, Whisperin' Jim did his own thing. He set up a couple of Irn-Bru crates and spoke in 100 towns in 100 days, taking his share of heckles, plus the occasional egg and rotten tomato. It was John Major's soapbox with a Scottish flavour and Murphy was easily one of the best things in the No campaign. Labour members suddenly realised what an underused asset he was. Will he become the Scottish Labour party's next national leader? At the time of going to press, it was too early to tell. But we may not have heard the last of this moderate, heather-brushed burr.

Illustrated by GERALD SCARFE

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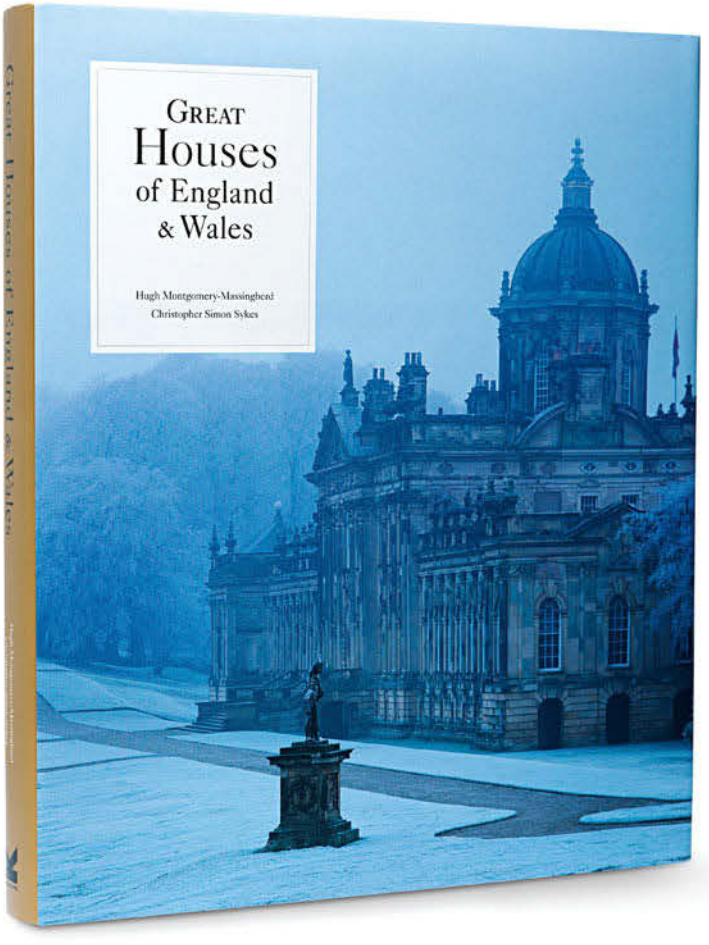
Books

Super-statelies, style supremos and David Bailey's barrow boys. By Sebastian Shakespeare

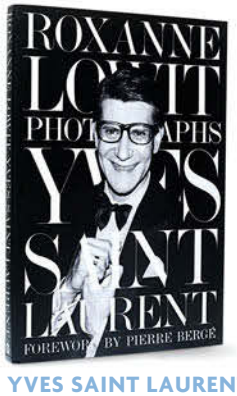


GREAT HOUSES OF ENGLAND & WALES BY HUGH MONTGOMERY-MASSINGBERD AND CHRISTOPHER SIMON SYKES *(Laurence King, £40)*

Be prepared for a visual feast of Palladian bridges, Corinthian columns and Capability Brown gardens. *Great Houses of England & Wales* may first have been published 20 years ago but it has never been bettered, and this newly reissued edition is a must. The roll call of ancestral seats reads like a toff rosary: Blenheim Palace, Chatsworth, Highclere, Petworth... all given superlative treatment by Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd and photographer Christopher Simon Sykes.

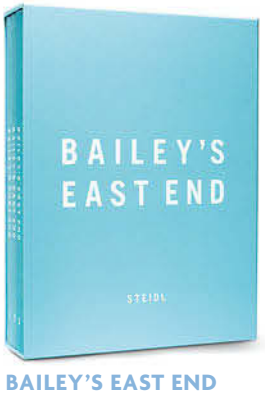
Together, they present a panoramic history of the aristocracy via 32 of its most splendid houses. The photographs include revelatory examples of English art and architecture, from medieval stone to the excesses of High Victorian taste, and the witty text delivers fascinating insights into upstairs/downstairs life. Many of the houses have proved to be popular film locations (Highclere for *Downton Abbey*, Castle Howard for the 1981 television adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*, Syon House for *Accident*, starring Dirk Bogarde), adding to their aura and mystique.

This book is also full of anecdotes and humour in the Wodehousian tradition. As Evelyn Waugh once observed of a Wodehouse creation: 'The gardens of Blandings Castle are that original garden from which we are all exiled.' These pages offer a glorious vision of a real and quintessentially English Eden.



YVES SAINT LAURENT BY ROXANNE LOWIT *(Thames & Hudson, £29.95)*

YSL: the initials evoke allure and sophistication, and this brilliant illustrated portrait of the iconic designer has both – together with heartfelt contributions from Jerry Hall, Grace Jones and Catherine Deneuve. Photographer Roxanne Lowit first met Saint Laurent in 1978 and witnessed his last show in 2002. Every moment of his professional life was a photo opportunity and Lowit has now captured it in her testament to 'Smoking' cool haute couture.

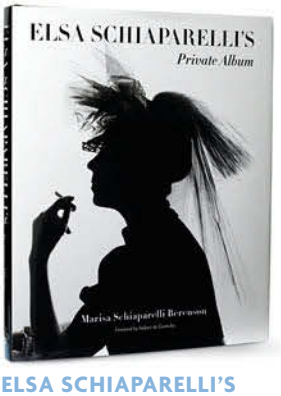


BAILEY'S EAST END BY DAVID BAILEY *(Steidl, £75)*

This bumper bundle consists of three volumes containing 620 of David Bailey's photographs of the East End of London, each volume a collection of images taken during a different decade. The second features the Eighties and the third the Noughties, while the first is devoted to the Sixties, with pictures of barrow boys, pubs, clubs and weddings. Accompanied by an interview with Bailey about growing up in the 'hood, the entire package is an elegiac and entertaining ride.

THE KINGDOM REVEALED BY ROB RYAN *(Hutchinson, £16.99)*

Paper-cut artist Rob Ryan dazzles again with an illustrated fairytale for all ages. This, the second volume in the Invisible Kingdom trilogy, is about a young king who has fled his palace. As he wanders through the streets he marvels at what he's never known: beautiful birds, strange people and other miracles of nature. But as night falls, the errant monarch needs to find food for himself... Here's a blissful example of old-fashioned storytelling superbly combined with contemporary art.



ELSA SCHIAPARELLI'S PRIVATE ALBUM *(Double-Barrelled Books, £39.95)*

Here, published for the first time, is Elsa Schiaparelli's photo album, as collated by her grand-daughter Marisa Berenson. Featuring portraits of celebrity friends such as Dalí and Cocteau, the book also offers charming snapshots of the life of one of the 20th century's most influential couturiers. Elsa grew to feel imprisoned by her own fame (Picasso painted her as a dove trying to escape from a cage). But she was, in Marisa's words, 'the prototypical punk'. ☐

STILL-LIFES: JODY TODD

Restaurants

'Marhaba' to a mini Maghreb marvel in Notting Hill. By Jeremy Wayne*

WORMWOOD
NORTH AFRICAN

When I have to cancel a reservation two nights running, Chris Cavaille, the manager of Wormwood, doesn't demur, despite the fact that my scrapped booking represents a fifth of his diminutive Notting Hill restaurant's capacity. 'Just come and see us when you can,' he tells me sweetly, which puts me in mind of JM Barrie's dictum: 'Always be a little kinder than is necessary.' Classy, I call it.

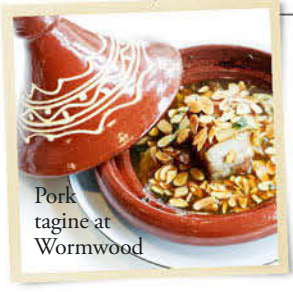
Real class is in short supply these days but you find it in bucketfuls at Wormwood. Named (like the local clink) after the aromatic shrub that is a principal ingredient of absinthe, it occupies the site of the former Uli, which was everyone's favourite Notting Hill Chinese. But Uli has a worthy successor in Wormwood.

It is owned by Akli Ourrad and his brother Rabah, who is also the chef. A renaissance kind of guy, Rabah was the frontman of an Algerian rap group before he headed to cooking school in Paris, eventually landing in London at Sketch and the Ledbury. Tall, dark and unnervingly handsome, he could easily have turned his hand to modelling if cheffing hadn't worked out, but the catwalk's loss is absolutely the kitchen's gain.

Two kinds of sourdough and the butteriest brioche arrive at the table at the same time as a freebie of lobster bavarois, layered over a limoncello gel in a miniature Kilner jar. I could eat just that and leave happy. But then come crisp croquettes of squid, and a red-wine risotto with girolles and cinnamon, which reminds me how alluring this spice can be when used discreetly. Discretion is evident too in a glorious cod brandade, the delicate vadouvan spices really lifting the whipped dish. Puddings like clementine and orange blossom (a mousse/parfait with clementine liqueur and marshmallow) are girlie, teasing – and look beautiful.

Wormwood has been conceived with a brilliant lightness of touch, from the spindly olive tree in the front window to the modern Sheraton-style chairs and zingy china. But it's Rabah's ambrosial French-North African cooking, with some Modern British and Asian twists, that should turn curious first-timers into diehard regulars.
At 16 All Saints Road, W11 (020 7854 1808).

HOW MUCH
Dinner, £130 for two
WHO GOES
Rappers, Hillbillies
WHAT TO EAT
Risotto, cod brandade
WHAT TO DRINK
Australian whites, New World reds, house cocktails



Pork tagine at Wormwood

Sashimi at Yashin Ocean House

SIDE ORDERS

YASHIN OCEAN HOUSE

117–119 Old Brompton Road, SW7 (020 7373 3990)

PICK ME!

From the *hone kawa senbei* – a wonderfully tangy whole mackerel skeleton with wind-dried skin – to the jewel-like puds, this oh-so-pretty Japanese newcomer is quite an experience. We loved the petrol-blue interior, the life-sized bronze horse, the exquisite sashimi tasting plate and the unforgettable miso cappuccino in a bone-china teacup.

KUROBUTA

17–20 Kendal Street, W2 (020 3475 4158)

Aussie-born ex-Nobu chef Scott Hallsworth now has a second Kurobuta, a very jolly *izakaya* (Japanese inn) near Connaught Street. If he murders the classics, you forgive him, because dishes like salmon sushi with fries and tuna-sashimi pizza are tastebud-titillatingly, rule-defyingly delicious.

DININGS

22 Harcourt Street, W1 (020 7723 0666)

This minuscule Maryleboner has an almost cult following. Chef and co-owner Masaki Sugisaki's cooking sashays with a European lilt, seabass carpaccio with truffle and ponzu jelly and toro sashimi with foie-gras mousse being just two examples of his thoroughly original dishes. Beg, lie, pull hair or bite to get a reservation.

THE BARFLY The Shrub & Shutter, SW9

A friendly, front-room kind of joint that's a cross between a larder and a lab, the Shrub & Shutter is arguably south London's hottest bar right now. Food plays a big part too and many of the drinks are 'interactive' – venison served with the Deer Hunter cocktail, for instance. My favourite? The Digital Daiquiri – rhum agricole, yellow chartreuse, golden falernum and treacle. Sweet, and not especially sophisticated, but so good I've thrown away the happy pills and am thinking of relocating to Brixton.
At 336 Coldharbour Lane (020 7326 0643); open till 3am at weekends.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK. *ARABIC FOR 'HELLO'

Art for sale

Horse magic, a study in movement and words that matter – Josh Spero's buys of the month

HORSING AROUND (£3,500)

EASTER ERIC (2014) BY RORY CARNEGIE

WHY BUY Horses represent what's most solid but also most sensitive about England; I bet you're tearing up at even the thought of your late-lamented first pony. And they also have a quiet mystery that rarely comes across in horsey paintings. Here, Carnegie plays up that strangeness by layering photos of the English landscape, creating a place that doesn't really exist and that we can't see clearly, before adding a photograph of Eric, the horse, who looks a little lost in the mist. Carnegie has an almost painterly approach – this could be a Stubbs scene – but uses the most modern technology to achieve it.
WHEN Until 17 January.
WHERE John Martin Gallery Chelsea, 80 Fulham Road, SW3 (jmlondon.com).

OKEY-DOKEY (£400 EACH; £1,100 FOR SET)

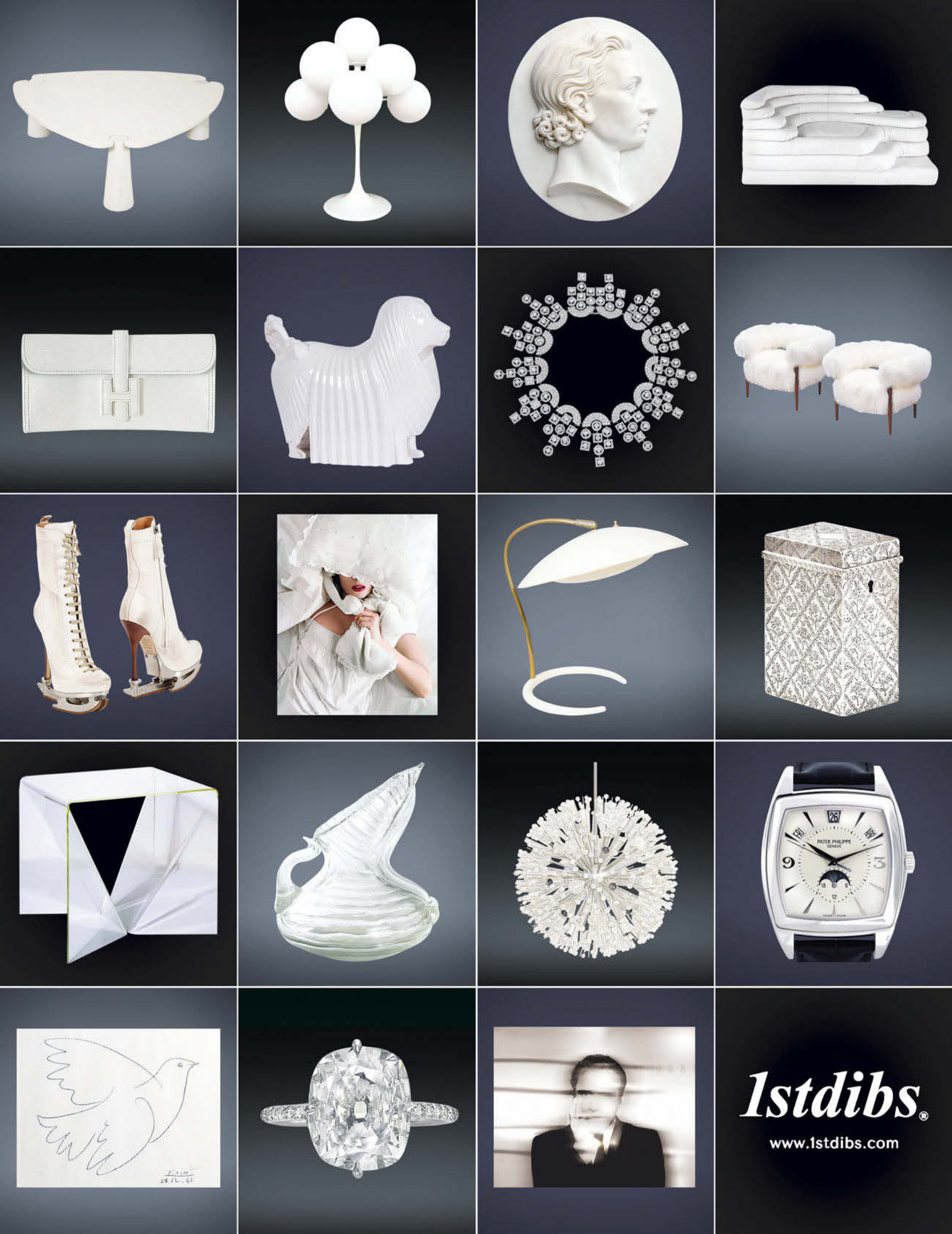
NO/OK (2013) BY CIARA PHILLIPS

WHY BUY For centuries, words weren't thought fit subjects for art, unlike such good old standards as the sea or pretty women, and were only used in paintings to label saints or on lovers' notes held by delicate ladies. But in the past few decades, art has gone from A to Z and back again. Here, Turner Prize-nominated Phillips is suggesting the force of three simple letters; saying NO or saying OK has the power to change your life. The letters, based on work Phillips did on a campaign for domestic workers' rights, are cracked and blurred, yet clear. But by pushing the two words together, she suggests our choices are never quite as easy as NO/OK; never just either/or.
WHEN Throughout January.
WHERE The Showroom, 63 Penfold Street, NW8 (theshowroom.org).

STEP BY STEP (£32,000)

UNTITLED #22 (2008) BY MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV

WHY BUY Turner wasn't a ship's captain and Degas never danced, but they still produced amazing pictures of the sea and of ballerinas, respectively. Sometimes, however, experts in one field turn into artists and bring their intimate knowledge with them. Baryshnikov's expertise is, of course, the body in motion, and he seems to feel each pose he shoots – and to make us feel it too: the straining and the twisting and the leaping of these dancers, bright against the blue. It's all so much better than those sculptures he made as Carrie's boyfriend in *Sex and the City*.
WHEN Until 31 January.
WHERE Contini Art UK, 105 New Bond Street, W1 (continiartuk.com).



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Gadgets

This month, I have scoured the U S of A to find its greatest gadgets that can be delivered to the U of K. It's a journey of the imagination... Bear with... By Emma Freud

THIS MONTH

Beer-Slushie-maker

Instagram glasses

Rainbow shower

Dog tweets

iPhone Post-its

We have some amazing gadgets in this country. But the greatest modern machines of all hail from across the pond. America... this is my tribute to the best you have to offer in 2015. And while I'm here, thanks for Channing Tatum's torso too.

BEER-SLUSHIE-MAKER

Envisage, if you possibly can, a world where a slushie is *not* made from Nuclear Chemical Toxic Waste, but instead is crafted from golden, refreshing, American beer. A world where you could say to the man serving at a friendly street kiosk: 'Hello, attractive young man – please may I have one of your frozen Beer-Slushies?' And the dishy Slushie man might say back to you: 'Oh, madam, I am so sorry but I am right out today as there's been a rush on and by the way I really admire the way you are rocking those pleather hotpants.' To which you could respond: 'Never mind, young man, I have my own portable frozen-Beer-Slushie-maker in my top-spec futuristic kitchen at home – I'll freeze up a Corona for myself right now and knock it back in one. It's the iced-up head I'm particularly fond of.' Imagine that! Now stop imagining it and buy the gadget. *£70 at japantrendshop.com*

INSTAGRAM GLASSES

Imagine a world that looks like Instagram – where everything is retro-style, hyper-coloured, vintagey-gorgeous and just slightly ironic. A world where very little ever goes wrong, the good people get the great jobs, teachers and nurses are paid more than autocue readers, all politicians are as virtuous as Colin Firth, all street vendors are as adorable and available as Harry Styles, parking attendants have been phased out, Net-a-Porter has a permanent 80-per-cent-off-everything sale and baby animals never grow up. That world can be yours if you spend all day wearing the Instagram sunglasses. It's true. *£37 at tenslife.com*

RAINBOW SHOWER

Now picture, if you can, a world where, every time you go into the shower, a rainbow appears. As it cascades, the water is transformed into a colour wheel of sparkling drops that bathe your body in dewy pastel hues. And when you emerge, your skin somehow feels more lean, moisturised and supple; your form is strong, vibrant and prepped for a full-on game of semi-professional baseball, and a small choir of feathery birds chirp their appreciation from the sunny branches of the piney-green tree outside your bathroom window. That's what it's like when you live in America. ALL THE TIME. *£25 at amazon.com*

DOG TWEETS

Imagine further a world where each time your lovely family dog barks, a little gadget round its neck hears the bark, translates it into English and posts it on Twitter. And just fancy then how much fun it would be to follow your dog so that 250 times a day a tweet appears in your timeline, saying something humorous like, 'When are you coming home…? *sad face*' or 'I can't reach the shelf with the dog treats on. Again.' Well, blow me down if some crazy Yank hasn't just gone and invented exackerly that doggone gadget and is retailing it Stateside for around 11 bucks. Ain't them folks crazy? *£7 at amazon.com*

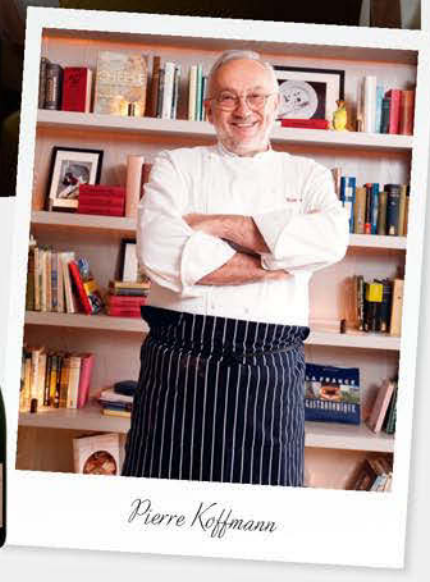
iPHONE POST-ITS

And finally, if you please, envision a world where, instead of notebook apps, you had an actual olde-worlde portable notebook, made of paper, that attached to your phone. Picture this scenario: your phone rings and, to your surprise and delight, it's the attractive chap from the Beer-Slushie stall. 'Goodness me, young man,' you exclaim. 'How on earth did you get my number?' 'Let's not go into that,' he mutters, 'but can you meet me at this address: Flat 2785, 9683610 854th Avenue, Mississippi 201853. Did you get that?' 'Now, just you wait a moment my lithe young dandy, and I'll pop your address onto a Post-it that I have attached to the back of my iPhone 6 (with watch).' 'Wow, low-and-hi-tech-lady, you are HOT.' 'No, that's just a little flush, it will pass soon.' *£5 at ilovehandles.com*

'Oh, madam, I am sorry but I'm right out of frozen Beer-Slushies today as there's been a rush on and by the way I really admire the way you are rocking those pleather hotpants'

NEXT MONTH **MY GADGET OF THE YEAR. YOU WON'T BELIEVE YOUR PANTS**

This is me on Twitter – @emmafreud



TATLER AND LAURENT-PERRIER

INVITE YOU TO AN

EXCLUSIVE CHAMPAGNE DINNER

AT KOFFMANN'S

THE BERKELEY
LONDON SW1

ON TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2015 FROM 6PM

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Join *Tatler* and Champagne Laurent-Perrier for a special four-course champagne-pairing menu created by renowned chef, Pierre Koffmann. Thanks to his culinary genius, this master chef has been lauded with an admirable number of Michelin stars throughout his illustrious career. At this exclusive evening, Pierre will present a classic menu to be enjoyed with a variety of Laurent-Perrier champagnes. Meanwhile, managing director of Laurent-Perrier and master of wine, David Hesketh, will talk you through the featured champagnes, bringing the experience to life with his discussion of complementary flavours.

Menu

Scallop carpaccio
Laurent-Perrier Ultra Brut

Cheese flan with French asparagus
Grand Siècle by Laurent-Perrier

Spring lamb with dauphinoise potatoes
Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosé

Vanilla millefeuille with mango
Laurent-Perrier Demi-Sec

Café ou thé
Coffee or tea with petits fours

TO BOOK YOUR TICKET

Please call 020 7152 3850 to book your ticket. Tickets cost £150 per person, including the set menu and a selection of Laurent-Perrier champagnes. Places are limited, non-refundable and issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

THIS PAGE & OPPOSITE, FELICITY JONES WEARS EMBROIDERED ORGANZA GOWN, £5,847, BY **ZAC POSEN**. PLATINUM & DIAMOND NECKLACE, POA, BY **HARRY WINSTON**

MY IDEA OF FUN

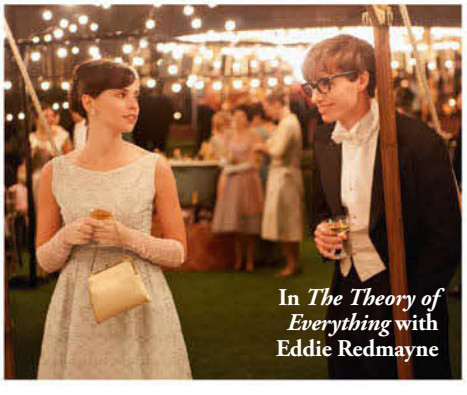
Felicity Jones's universe is about to explode – she's appearing opposite Eddie Redmayne's Stephen Hawking in one of the biggest films of the year – and she can't wait, she tells Luciana Bellini

Photographed by PHILIP GAY

Styled by DEEP KAILEY

Felicity Jones is tugging her smart felt trilby lower over her eyes. 'I love a silly hat,' she says. We're sitting outside Pizza East Portobello, eating olives and talking about whether she can get away with wearing her pyjamas on the red carpet. 'I'm quite tomboyish and I like being comfortable – but that's not what the red carpet is about.'

It's an issue that's about to become very pressing. Next month, the 31-year-old stars in *The Theory of Everything*, a biopic about Stephen Hawking based on the memoirs of his first wife, Jane Wilde. Eddie Redmayne plays Hawking and Felicity his Jane, who met Stephen at Cambridge University and married him, aged 18, directly after he was diagnosed with motor neurone disease and given two years to live. The film examines their relationship more than his illness. It's a tale of love in exceptional circumstances and Felicity is outstanding, bringing a quiet strength and almost regal stillness to the role. When we meet, she has just returned from the Toronto International Film Festival, where the film received a standing ovation. 'Toronto was incredible – I've never experienced anything like that in my life. My legs were shaking and I was hanging onto Eddie thinking, "This is NUTS."'



In *The Theory of Everything* with Eddie Redmayne

Felicity spent her childhood in the leafy village of Bournville, just outside Birmingham, with her mother – who worked in advertising – and her older brother. Her parents divorced when she was three: 'If your parents split young, it makes you grow up faster. It breeds a self-reliance.' She started acting as a child 'as a hobby', landing her first role in a TV film at 11 and then starring in *The Worst Witch* series a year later. She studied English at Oxford and soon afterwards won the lead in an ITV adaptation of *Northanger Abbey*. She has dominated the market in literary period roles ever since.

In *The Invisible Woman* with Ralph Fiennes

Recently single (she split from her boyfriend of 10 years, artist Ed Fornieles, earlier this year), Felicity has just moved to New York, renting an apartment in Brooklyn – 'it's just a mattress on the floor at the moment.' When in London, she stays in Highgate so she can be close to her playwright friend Polly Stenham and Hampstead Heath, where she walks Polly's French bulldog and swims in the Ladies' Pond. 'It's freezing but I love it.' Ask her what she does for fun and she's momentarily at a loss. 'Fun? What's that?' She's often accused of being too serious, too earnest. 'People have this idea that just because you went to university you're really straitlaced, but I'm not.' As if to illustrate, Felicity suddenly jumps up, shouting, 'Flo!' Florence Welch, of Florence + the Machine, a good friend, is strolling towards us. She sits down and conversation turns to the difficulty of representing yourself publicly; it's something that gives Felicity restless nights. She says it's easier for musicians – they're allowed to be a bit wacky. 'But when you're an actress, you don't want people to be distracted by who you are, what you've been getting up to.' Florence agrees but admits that she hasn't had the chance to get out much lately, having spent the last few months tucked away in the recording studio. 'I'm fed up with being a hermit – I just want to go out and really party,' she says. Felicity smiles, a little sadly. 'I know exactly how you feel.'

The Theory of Everything is released on 1 January.

With playwright Polly Stenham at Annabel's, 2012

PHOTOGRAPHS: REX FEATURES

PANELLED FLORAL APPLIQUE DRESS, POA, BY **NICHOLAS OAKWELL**. CALFSKIN PUMPS, £480, BY **TABITHA SIMMONS**. PLATINUM & DIAMOND EARRINGS (JUST VISIBLE), POA, BY **HARRY WINSTON**

FAUX-LEATHER BUSTIER DRESS, £2,475, BY **LANVIN**. PLATINUM & DIAMOND EARRINGS, POA, BY **HARRY WINSTON**

QUILTED SILK DRESS, £14,500, BY **DIOR**. LEATHER SANDALS, £655, BY **GIANVITO ROSSI**. GOLD, DIAMOND SAPPHIRE, EMERALD & TURQUOISE EARRINGS (JUST VISIBLE), POA, BY **BULGARI**

QUILTED NYLON DRESS, £8,900, BY **DIOR**. *ON LEFT EAR*, LACQUER & GOLD-FINISH PEARL EARRING, £290, BY **DIOR**. *ON RIGHT EAR*, GOLD, DIAMOND & PEARL EARRING, £65,500, BY **BUCCELLATI**

BRODERIE-ANGLAISE RUFFLE DRESS, MADE TO ORDER, BY **ALEXANDER McQUEEN**. GOLD & DIAMOND EARRINGS, £3,314, BY **INEZ AND VINOODH**

FOR STOCKISTS, SEE ADDRESS BOOK. HAIR BY LEIGH KEATES AT PREMIER HAIR AND MAKE-UP, USING SHU UEMURA ART OF HAIR. MAKE-UP BY MARY GREENWELL AT PREMIER HAIR AND MAKE-UP, USING CHANEL S 2015 AND HYDRA BEAUTY SKINCARE. NAILS BY AMA QUASHIE AT CLM HAIR AND MAKE-UP, USING DIOR ABRICOT MANICURE COLLECTION & CAPTURE TOTALE HAND REPAIR CREAM. PRODUCTION, ELLE KORHALILLER. FASHION ASSISTANT, EVA RAMIREZ

Media tycoon, poetry lover, Russian dandy, art collector, social butterfly, sexual enigma, lavish host, spiritual adventurer...

David Jenkins unravels the mystery that is Evgeny Lebedev

So, I ask David Walliams, what's your friend Evgeny Lebedev's idea of fun? 'Sitting people he thinks will hate each other next to each other at dinner,' Walliams replies. 'Nigel Farage and Lily Cole was a famously explosive encounter. Nigel went out for a smoke and never came back!'

But what about Evgeny's facial hair – mocked as 'Santa Claus: The Prequel' by one friend and 'Two Beards' by a derisive *Private Eye*? Walliams puts up a spirited defence: 'Evgeny needs his two beards, he looks very young without them. About 12, in fact. So it helps convince people he really is this hugely powerful press baron, and not a child.'

The (actually) 34-year-old Lebedev certainly is a press baron, with the *Evening Standard* and *The Independent* titles in his portfolio – though some mean souls insist he's in the game solely to enjoy the company of A-listers and the crowning glory of the *Evening Standard* Theatre Awards, where Dame Edna Everage addresses him as 'my favourite little olly'. He certainly has an unusual enthusiasm for self-promotion in his papers' pages, but hard-nosed newspaper analysts give him credit. 'You can't take it away from him and his father [Alexander, the ex-KGB agent, sometime billionaire and co-owner of Russia's bravest opposition paper],' says one. 'They've kept the *Standard* and *Independent* alive. That's a fact.' Though one that many sacked journalists find hard to swallow.

But it's true. When 'the Lebs' – as Matthew Freud used to call them – bought the *Evening Standard* in 2009, it was selling fewer than 150,000 copies a day and losing £30m a year. Now it's free, making money (£1.75m in 2013) and given away to more than 900,000 people a day. Where once 7,000 copies were bought each day at Canary Wharf, 77,000 copies are now handed out. Where pre-Evgeny it had been a negative paper, it now celebrates London – while running deeply felt campaigns about the dispossessed, the homeless, gangs and literacy. *The Independent* is in direr straits, selling fewer full-price copies than there are newsagents in the country. But the daily's spin-off, *i*, sells 300,000 or so copies a day and, say Lebedev boosters, the *Indy* loses less money than both *The Times* and *The Guardian*. The Fleet Street joke is that Evgeny only keeps the *Indy* going as a wedding present to Amol Rajan, his former right-hand man and consigliere, though the 31-year-old editor has made the paper sharper and far better designed. In fact, it's been reported that *The Independent* is up for sale and that emissaries are scouring the City for buyers. Evgeny pooh-poohs the notion, but the owners are, one confidant told me, 'open to offers, should anyone make one. As all businessmen are.' As for the catastrophic London Live TV station... well, Evgeny at one point talked of hosting a show on it, and maybe he did – but no one was watching. Viewing figures have been so minuscule as to be unrecordable. Now, though, numbers are climbing. From small acorns... perhaps.

'Oligarch', though, won't go down so well, however vigorously Evgeny will chuckle at Dame Edna's 'little olly'. ('For a man of power, status and wealth he is endlessly teasable and humorous,' his great ▷

PHOTOGRAPH: JOSS McKINLEY

Evening Standard **and** ***Independent*** **proprietor Evgeny Lebedev**

◁ friend Stephen Fry told me.) Nonetheless, Evgeny likes to distance himself from London's moneyed, vulgarian Russians. 'They come out of the wild,' he has said. 'That's why they behave as they do.' (Evgeny hails from the nomenklatura, the caste of high officials who ran the Soviet Union.) And, he's added, 'They're driven by cash and nothing else. It's a combination of having money and not a lot of education or aesthetic understanding. Taste, you know.'

Evgeny does have taste, and a master's in history of art from the LSE. According to Geordie Greig, editor of *The Mail on Sunday* and 'a great friend', Evgeny will zip off to the West Country in search of black swans for his garden or 'helicopter down to stay with David Cholmondeley at Houghton to see the Russian exhibition of Catherine the Great's pictures. It's that arc. It's exactly what English aristocrats used to do on the Grand Tour: you know, picking up things like masks from Papua New Guinea and 16th-century sculptures in Rome. He's got an incredible visual sense.' And he provides an arresting spectacle himself. 'I really, really like Evgeny,' says an old chum. 'And I really enjoy watching him cut a swathe through English society. He loves art, he loves houses, he loves nature, he loves gardens. And he loves famous people. But that's the way the world works.'

Evgeny has plenty of houses. There's a handsome flat in Portland Place, a 10th-century castle in Umbria that plays home to his wolf, Boris, and that he's restored from a roofless wreck, and another splendid Umbrian property, Palazzo Terranova. His London office houses his 'library' of 500 scented oils, the better for him to indulge the 'very good' nose he has – though not, one imagines, the penile nose of a piece he displays there, the Chapman Brothers' *Fuck Face*. But his jewel is the Stud House at Hampton Court, its garden designed by the Dowager Marchioness of Salisbury (Greig brought them together) and its interior a thing of wonder, with works by Tracey Emin, David Hockney, Antony Gormley, the Chapmans and more, as well as 17th-century Japanese lacquer cabinets, blinds hand-drawn in southern Rajasthan, 1820s hanging theatre lights from the Chatsworth sale and a 'Regence' bed in the 'Elton' room – Evgeny is godfather to Elton John and David Furnish's son, Zachary. The Prince Regent, Evgeny told *World of Interiors*, apparently 'had some very gay times here'.

Evgeny also loves a party – though those who've played host to him say he often seems 'uncomfortable' off his own turf. He is, however, says Sarah Sands, editor of the

LEBEDEV WITH... HUGH GRANT

...ANDRE BALAZS

...DAMES HELEN MIRREN & MAGGIE SMITH

...SAMANTHA CAMERON

...KEVIN SPACEY & SARAH SANDS

...VISCOUNT ROTHERMERE

...ELIZABETH HURLEY, PATRICK COX & TAMARA BECKWITH

...JEMIMA KHAN

...JOELY RICHARDSON

...DAME JUDI DENCH

...STEPHEN FRY

...MIKHAIL GORBACHEV & GEORDIE GREIG

...JAY JOPLING & TRACEY EMIN

...SIR ELTON JOHN

Evening Standard, 'a great host', and his parties are 'full of people you really want to meet'. She would say that, wouldn't she? But other guests say the same. 'Politicians to actors to artists. And Keira Knightley – everyone you wanted to see,' one guest recalled of a recent Christmas party. 'Have you had dinner at Stud House?' a friend of mine asked me. 'Everyone there was famous – except me.'

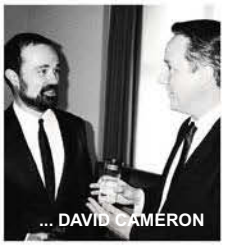
Evgeny likes an all-nighter, and he apologised to me for the relative earliness with which the party to launch London Live last April shut down. A 'high-octane' affair at Evgeny's Portland Place pad that 'looked like Madame Tussauds come to life', as one guest described it, it kicked off with the very early arrival of Chuka Umunna, whom Evgeny entertained in his dressing gown, along with Boris Johnson. Fully clothed, he moved through a crowd of politicians (Cameron, Cable, Miliband, Campbell), performers (Steve Coogan, Hayley Atwell, Harry Enfield, Anna Friel), media folk (AA Gill, Alan Rusbridger, Tony Hall) and denizens of the arts world (Nicholas Serota, Tracey Emin, Nicholas Hytner). Harriet Harman chatted with Grayson Perry – 'I know which I'd rather talk to,' said one wag – and Nat Rothschild was in dangerous proximity to George Osborne, with whom he so spectacularly fought after a holiday in Corfu. That, as Walliams has pointed out, is Evgeny's way: he likes to invite people others wouldn't dare put together.

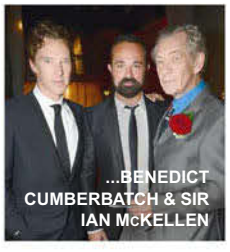
The party, though, made a further point: that Russian-born Evgeny is a paid-up member of a certain sort of British Establishment – an Establishment he formally joined when Elton John and David Furnish gave a dinner for 150 at the Royal Courts of Justice in 2010 to celebrate Evgeny's taking British citizenship.

But he's a restless soul, forever scampering around the world, often with Johnnie Shand Kydd, who's almost his personal photographer, in tow – he's not averse to having some pretty cringe-making 'What I Did on My Holidays' pictures published in his papers. This summer he was in Burma, revelling in its lack of internet contact, then in North Korea, and then off to spend a week with his personal shaman in the far east of Russia. Spiritually fortified, he promptly took Boris Johnson and a cadre of arts heavies to Italy. Lucky dogs: weekends there are prized. There's truffle hunting to be done, and boars to pursue. And there are long nights of fun to be had – 'he sits there like a pasha,' one guest said, 'watching everyone have a good time. But nothing *naughty* happened. Mind you, I'm a goody two-shoes.' There are also plays to be read aloud there: one afternoon, Danny Huston

PHOTOGRAPHS: EVENING STANDARD/EYEVINE, REX FEATURES, GETTY IMAGES, XPOSURE.COM, JOHNNIE SHAND KYDD, HUGO BURNAND

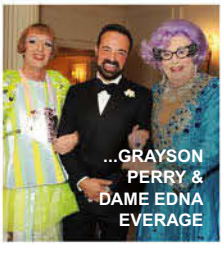
...CHRISTIAN SLATER


... DAVID CAMERON


...BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH & SIR IAN McKELLEN

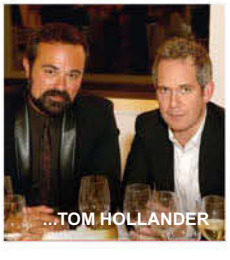
...MATTHEW FREUD

...CHRISTOPHER BAILEY & ANNA WINTOUR


...GRAYSON PERRY & DAME EDNA EVERAGE

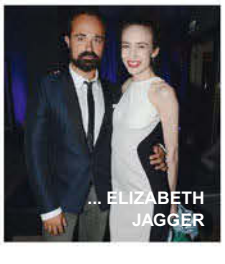
... LILY COLE

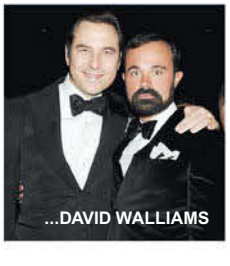
...ALEXANDER LEBEDEV


...TOM HOLLANDER

...SOPHIE DAHL

... BARONESS THATCHER


... ELIZABETH JAGGER


...DAVID WALLIAMS

...LIVIA FIRTH

and Evgeny read Pinter's *The Homecoming*. Afterwards, Lebedev showed Huston a copy of the original manuscript, signed by the two actors who'd first starred in it, Ralph Richardson and John Gielgud – 'a marvellous bauble to show off,' as another guest put it. He has a voice coach and likes reading aloud: Larkin's 'At Arundel Tomb', for instance, standing by the real Arundel's Tomb, in Chichester, with Amol Rajan – 'that was fun', Evgeny told Decca Aitkenhead of *The Guardian*, who memorably commented: 'I struggle to picture Rupert Murdoch and Andy Coulson reading poetry together on the South Coast.'

Equally, one can't quite envisage Murdoch behaving as winningly as Evgeny did at his birthday party in Umbria. Vanessa Redgrave and Ralph Fiennes were leading an intense discussion on Chekhov. Then, Walliams reports, a waiter 'put "Careless Whisper" on the stereo and turned the volume up so loud it completely drowned out the conversation. While some might get annoyed, Evgeny just found the situation hilarious. Soon the two of us were slow dancing to George Michael.'

Steady on. But you do see the point. Lebedev is intriguing. As Sarah Sands says, it's better 'having a proprietor everyone asks about, rather than some grim, dreary businessman no one cares about'. He is, she adds, 'an adventurer, a romantic figure. And one who's really interested in journalism.'

As is his father. Alexander Lebedev married into the nomenklatura – Evgeny's maternal great-grandfather was head of biology in the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Science ran in the family: Evgeny's mother, Natalia, is a microbiologist, and as a nine-year-old Evgeny was taken by his grandfather 'for my first holiday' to 'the radioactive wasteland of Chernobyl'. By the time Evgeny was born, he's written, his father no longer believed in communism. Nonetheless, Alexander joined the KGB – 'an attractive proposition for a young and ambitious person like my father'. His job took him to London in 1987 and, one hopes, to dead-letter drops by the Brompton Oratory. More mundanely, one of his tasks was to read the British press; maybe he fell in love with the *Evening Standard* then. Evgeny went to St Barnabas and St Philip's school in

'HE SITS THERE LIKE A PASHA,' ONE GUEST SAID, 'WATCHING EVERYONE HAVE A GOOD TIME'

Which brings us to sex. Walliams met Evgeny through Geri Halliwell, with whom Lebedev was going out. 'I assumed he was her gay friend, but no, I was wrong! ... We are pretty similar, really, especially as we are both incredibly camp.' Camp, one friend suggests, in the way of being a member of the Piers Gaveston Society, had Evgeny been at Oxford in the Eighties; camp in the way the sexually charged Mick Jagger is; camp in his sartorial dandyism; and camp in the smooth, smooth smoothness of his caramel-coloured skin – 'I said, "Please! Take me to his facialist!"' remembered one dinner companion.

And for all the close friendships with gay men – with Elton, with Patrick Cox, with Stephen Fry, with Ian McKellen – there've been girlfriends, Joely Richardson among them, at least one of whom reported eager, even incessant, sexual activity. Evgeny himself has said, 'If I was [gay], I'd come out.' Which he hasn't. And in the end, who cares? As one fan puts it: 'There's a mystique about him. You're intrigued. He's like a glinting diamond, with so many facets. You thought it was cut simply, but it's more complex than that.'

Earls Court and thence, at 11, to Holland Park Comprehensive, to which he daily wore an immaculate jacket and tie. He wasn't, he's said, bullied.

The family returned to Moscow a year later as communism was faltering. 'You heard about death everywhere,' Evgeny has said. 'People were killed on the street for a jacket or stripped and murdered on the Metro for a pair of jeans.' His father went into business; two assassination attempts failed – it was that sort of time. Gradually, Lebedev père acquired a bank, the largest potato farm in Europe, gas interests, a slice of Aeroflot and some resorts in the Crimea. But, says Amol Rajan, he believes Alexander's proudest achievement to be the co-ownership, with Mikhail Gorbachev, of *Novaya Gazeta*, the opposition paper. 'Evgeny and Alexander have a deep, romantic, emotional attachment to the idea of journalism,' says Rajan. 'And that idea's been fortified by the murder of [investigative] journalists like Anna Politkovskaya [who worked for *Novaya Gazeta*].'

It's no surprise, then, that Alexander's had his own brushes with the state. His National Reserve Bank has CONTINUED ON PAGE 159

England's finest PRIEST HOLES

They are the ultimate original feature, found in only the oldest of houses. Now mainly used as nifty hiding places, after the Reformation they were lifesavers for persecuted Catholics. Georgina Blackwell squeezes into some treasonous Tudor tight spots

Photographed by ALUN CALLENDER

Zachary Petre-Azeem and his cousin William Petre at the entrance to one of Ingatestone Hall's two priest holes

INGATESTONE HALL
INGATESTONE, ESSEX

Built in the mid-16th century; seat of the Petre family for 400 years

Ingatestone Hall has not one but two priest holes. The first was found in 1855 when a child dropped a toy through the floorboards and exposed the space beneath. The second, which most likely doubled as a secret chapel, was discovered more than 60 years later. They date from around 1570, when extensions were built to disguise their construction. 'You couldn't just get the builders in and say, "Build me a priest hole,"' says Dominic Petre, who lives in the house with his wife, Marisa, and children, Alice and William. One of the priest holes' entrances leads to Alice's room but has been sealed off with a wardrobe. The children mainly use the hiding places during games of sardines, which is preferred over hide-and-seek. Jesuit John Payne was chaplain to the Catholic Petre family in 1576, posing as the family's steward. He was betrayed by a fellow servant and hung, drawn and quartered in Chelmsford market place in 1582. The Petres were fortunate to escape persecution, but Sir William Petre, who built the house, was a canny one. The son of a West Country farmer, he became tutor to the Boleyns, helped Thomas Cromwell dissolve the monasteries and was a privy councillor under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. How did he keep his head and his faith? 'He was totally discreet,' says Dominic. 'After all, he knew where all the bodies were buried.' ▷

Ingatestone Hall

William, his sister Alice and Zachary in an Ingatestone priest hole

Coughton Court

COUGHTON COURT
ALCESTER, WARWICKSHIRE

Built in the early 15th century; home of the Throckmorton family for 600 years

Magnus Birch hasn't been in the priest hole at Coughton Court (pronounced Coe-ton) since he was 14 years old – and with good reason. It takes a crew of six, a tool kit and an extending ladder to get Magnus (more burly gent than ascetic holy man) through the gap in the floor and then down 15 feet of dusty, dark turret. Built by the most famous priest-hole builder of them all, St Nicholas Owen, this particular hideaway is a cunning 'double hide', with a second compartment concealed below the floor of the first. When it was fully opened up in 1910, there was still a rope ladder and bedding inside. Magnus admits to being a touch claustrophobic, but calls up: 'It's fine – although if I'd known I'd be in here so long, I would have got someone to send down a glass of wine.' Magnus has an organic-wine business in London but is often at Coughton visiting his grandmother, Clare McLaren Throckmorton. The Catholic Throckmortons have lived here for 600 years and the house was a hotbed of conspiracy. The Throckmorton Plot to assassinate Elizabeth I and place Mary, Queen of Scots on the throne cost Sir Francis Throckmorton his head. And it is here that the Gunpowder Plotters amassed their arms and ammunition, and also where they received word of the plan's failure. But the only thing Magnus (the anointed heir of Coughton) is plotting is tomorrow's party in the magnificent panelled dining room – if he can get out of the priest hole. ▷

The entrance to the priest hole in Coughton Court is on the floor inside the doorway

THE GUNPOWDER PLOTTERS AMASSED THEIR ARMS AND AMMUNITION HERE...

Magnus Birch in Coughton's priest hole

NAWORTH CASTLE
BRAMPTON, CUMBRIA

Built in the early 14th century; home of the Howards for 450 years

Alex Howard is gleeful as she recounts the tale of the time her father, Philip, snuck into the priest hole at Naworth Castle to have a naughty fag when he was 13 years old. 'It was only one cigarette and I haven't had another since,' says Philip. Situated in the private chapel in the topmost room of a tower, the Naworth priest hole is luxuriously proportioned and even has a small window. It was built by Lord William Howard, a devout Catholic, who was also known for hanging a lot of Scots – 63 members of one clan in two years, or so the story goes. The stump of the hangman's tree is still in the grounds. 'We had a pit for them too,' says Philip, 'but you needed a chapel, to pray for their souls.' One famous occupant was Catholic activist Nicholas Roscarrock, who is said to have been the last person officially racked in England. The Howard family endured their fair share of hardship and several generations spent time in the Tower of London. There was Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, who tried to marry Mary, Queen of Scots in the Ridolfi Plot and was beheaded. His son, Sir Philip Howard, refused to recant and languished there for the last 13 years of his life. He has been canonised. However, not all the Howards were quite so holy. 'There was one particularly dodgy ancestor,' explains Philip – Sir Charles Howard, who 'was considered one of the most dissolute men in the kingdom'. Sir Charles ditched Catholicism for Cromwell and Puritanism during the Civil War. He then swapped sides (and religion) again and helped install Charles II. In the process, he was created Earl of Carlisle and amassed a huge fortune – largely from slavery – that enabled his grandson to build Castle Howard as a holiday home. ▷

Alex Howard, with her rabbit Julian Assange, emerging from Naworth's priest hole

Inside the Naworth priest hole

The castle's private chapel, with the priest hole's trapdoor entrance in the corner

Naworth Castle

Sir Thomas and Lady Ingilby with Mabel

Mabel, the Ingilbys' Westie, in Ripley Castle's priest hole

Ripley Castle

RIPLEY CASTLE
HARROGATE, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Built in the early 14th century; seat of the Ingilbys for 700 years

Sir Thomas Ingilby remembers the day Ripley Castle's priest hole was found. It was 1963 and he had just come home from prep school. The house was being scoured for deathwatch beetle and when some wood panelling in the Knight's Chamber was removed a small hiding place, crudely carved out of the stone wall, was revealed. There was just enough space for a medium-sized human being, curled into a ball, plus a Bible and a candle. 'Priest hunters would poke their swords between the panels to see if they would get an "ouch",' explains Lady Ingilby. Two Ingilby ancestors were famous Catholic firebrands: Blessed Francis Ingleby (the family name became 'Ingilby' in the late 18th century) was ordained in France and returned to England to preach but was caught in 1586 and hung, drawn and quartered in York. He is awaiting canonisation but must perform two posthumous miracles first. Francis's brother, David 'the Fox', evaded capture for his entire life. 'He was the Scarlet Pimpernel of his day', says Sir Thomas, and even Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth I's ruthless spymaster, was afraid of him. Ripley's priest hole also saved the life of Sir William Ingleby in 1644. The Royalist Sir William fled back to Ripley after the king's forces were defeated at the Battle of Marston Moor but found that the victorious Oliver Cromwell had chosen the castle as his billet. Sir William hid in the hole overnight while his sister, Jane, held Cromwell at pistol point in the room below. Thankfully, things are much jollier these days. 'We might place a skeleton or a fluffy toy in there,' says Lady Ingilby, 'to keep the tour guides on their toes.' □

SIR DAVID & LADY TANG

A time to live

Sir David Tang's charmed existence juddered to an abrupt halt on the day he learnt he had liver cancer. But life-saving surgery and the infinite support of his wife, friends and family have enabled him to carry on

'What do you mean, I have got cancer?' I asked, in a small room with utilitarian furniture under a dull fluorescent light.

'I mean you have cancer, serious cancer. You have two tumours in your liver.'

'I know I have a sense of humour, but not a sense of tumours!'

I am afraid most of us do not believe that the Big C will affect us, believing that it only happens to others, or in films or soaps as a convenient plot device. Then out of the blue, it does happen to us. Initially we are not alarmed. It is similar to being in an accident. At first, we don't feel the physical pain – it is absorbed through mental shock. But soon afterwards, we experience that sense of trepidation and become slightly lost. We suddenly become silent and want to repair to somewhere quiet for our brain to take stock.

I left Harley Street, which is tedious Marylebone tinged with the Middle East, and went straight home, where I slumped into my chair at my desk. In front of me hung a beautiful drawing that I have always treasured, almost eight feet across, of Mount Sinai and its valleys and the desert landscape stretching to the distant horizon. This was where Moses had brought down the Commandments, announcing to the tens of thousands awaiting that he had managed to reduce them to 10, but that adultery was still in. That biblical joke had always amused me, but on this occasion I didn't laugh. Instead, I blubbed, cupping my cheeks with my hands as if I was an adolescent feeling frustrated with all the poxes on the face. Then I telephoned my wife, who was in Hong Kong.

'Hello! What you doing?'

'Oh, hello! I am having a stretch.'

'I... I have got some bad news.'

'What does it stretch to?'

'I have got cancer of the liver. It's late-stage.'

'Who told you this?'

'Some doctor.'

'Which doctor?'

'I can't remember his name. It's something like Basmati!'

'Basmati is a rice!'

'Anyway, it doesn't matter. I need a second opinion and have to act fast.'

'Oh, Pooh, I will come to London tonight. Don't worry. I will be with you all the way.'

That evening, I couldn't stop thinking about my degenerating condition. I wondered if I needed to change my life. I wondered how I should tell my family and friends. I wondered if I should feel fearful about dying. All these questions seemed overwhelming and ones that I never thought I would need to dissect and answer. But I decided on three things: first, I would have to feel very strong about any treatment, whether it was major surgery or the dreaded chemotherapy – or both. Secondly, I would have to learn everything I could about my disease so that I could properly assess all the different options, and not be bamboozled by physicians and surgeons whose multiple opinions I should seek. Thirdly, perhaps most important of all, I would have to keep or even exaggerate my sense of humour. I knew I should continue to look at life with a full spectrum of absurdities, as if cancer was an absurdity, so that I would not get into a depression or become a pessimist. The laborious days ahead, I knew, were to be best spent with maximum wit and humour and laughter, however serious the going got.

I looked at my watch at Crown Aspinalls, where I had gone for hours, watching the roulette ball spinning randomly round and round the wheel, to pass the hours of insomnia. It was 4am. I got into my car and motored towards Heathrow in the breaking dawn to collect my wife. T5 was replete with arriving passengers with ruddy faces and ghastly shorts, and bored-looking drivers with tatty placards. The air was far from welcoming and somehow the terminal was filled with an irritating drone. When my begum emerged, we hugged each other in silence. She whispered in my ear that I need not worry because she would help me through the troubled waters, like Simon and Garfunkel, I supposed.

Within two weeks, I was in hospital, ready for major surgery that would last 10 hours. This was what I wrote to my wife just before going into the theatre:

'As we walk on the edge of life, we must watch our shadows and steer them away from the cliff and let them hug the land with the help of the sun behind us. We will be lonely in that wilderness, because nature is the overwhelming mystery in which we live and there is no human conceit that could comprehend it. Most of us will amble through life without thinking too much of it, but when we are faced with adversity, we begin to grasp our own insignificance. Yet there are two things which give meaning to our existence and they are cultivated by us every day, almost subconsciously, through the lands and the mountains on which we tread, and the seas and the rivers on which we sail. They are the vital support that pulls us away from the edge of the cliff when we are filled with doubts and resignations. These are our families and friends. Their love is the stuff of life on which we depend, especially in moments of danger. Without them, we would walk along the edge of life in a storm without a sun that would guide our shadows. Those of us who have the fortune of family and friends live a life for which it is always worth fighting. And so our gratitude should always be reserved for those who are dear to us and who are like trees of oxygen from whose acorns we have sown throughout our lives. My wife, who is both family and friend, has shown me in my own dangerous journey to be the rising sun that will guide my shadow to a shelter of safety, in which there could be no better discovery of love or life.' □

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAN DAVIDSON, THE PICTURE LIBRARY, DOMINIC O'NEILL, DAFYDD JONES, CAMERA PRESS/MARK STEWART, REX FEATURES, TIM GRAHAM/CORBIS

FLORENCE WELCH

Before the 28-year-old singer started Florence + the Machine, she was in a band called The Toxic Cockroaches. She describes herself as a 'choirgirl gone horribly, desperately wrong'.

SILK DRESS, £1,280, BY MICHAEL KORS

FIRECRACKERS

Of all the various ways you can group people together, hair colour seems the most arbitrary. But we've gone for it anyway

Photographed by ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

Styled by GRACE CODDINGTON

KAREN ELSON

The sun doesn't shine much in Oldham, which is why 35-year-old Karen Elson's skin is that luminous shade of alabaster. And the reason her hair is so magnificently russet? She is passionate about the Pre-Raphaelites. Well, maybe that isn't the *actual* reason. It's probably got more to do with genetics and hairdressers, but we think it's relevant.

SEQUIN DRESS, POA, BY **CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION**. PATENT SHOES, £440, BY **MANOLO BLAHNIK**

JESSICA CHASTAIN

If you run out of stuff to say to yoga-loving actress Jessica Chastain, 37, just ask her to serenade you with her ukulele. But not if you happen to be hanging out in Claridge's – they told her to stop last time.

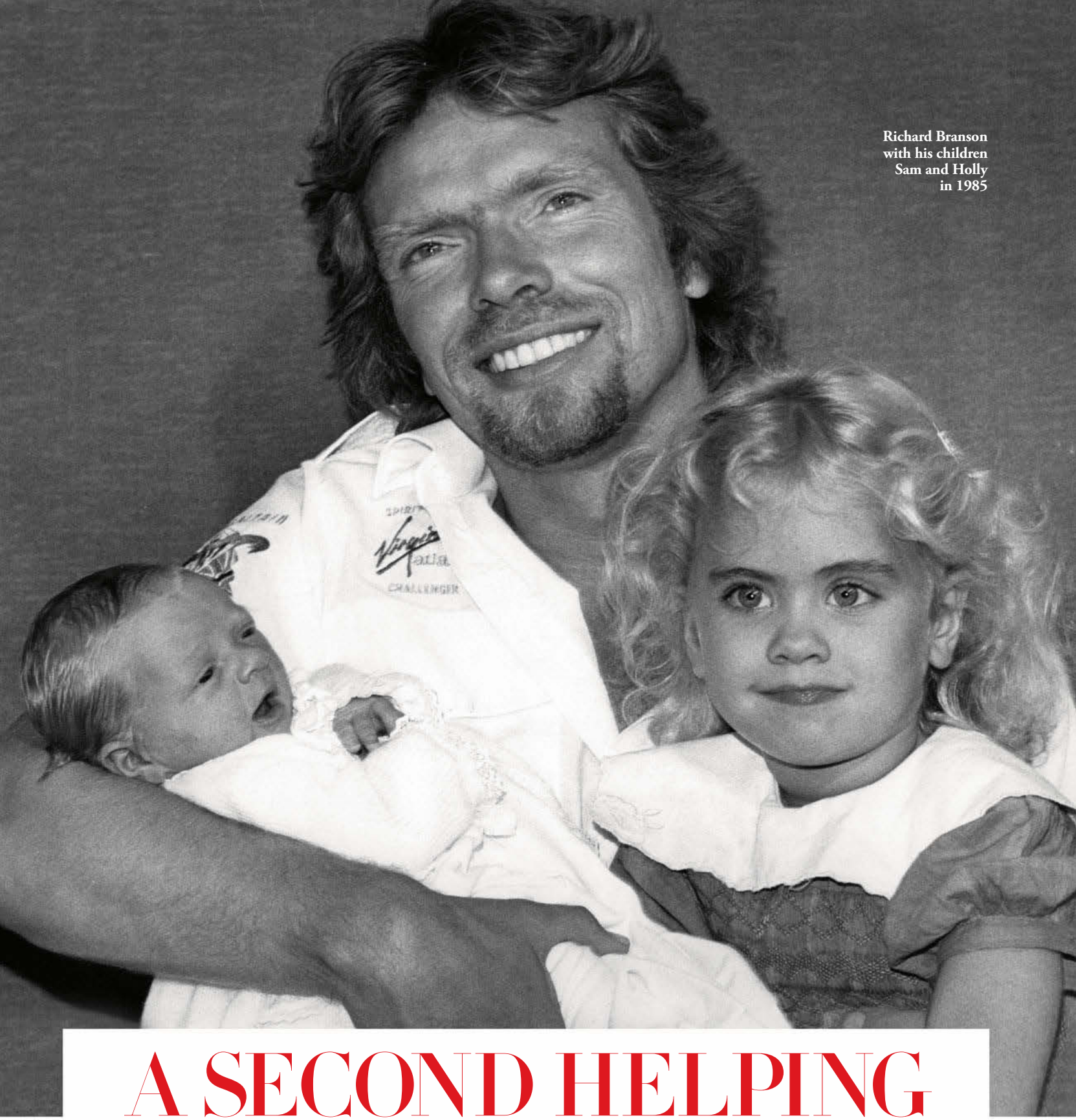
WOOL COAT, £2,750, BY **HERMES**.

JULIANNE MOORE & LIV FREUNDLICH

Oscar-nominated actress Julianne Moore, 54, was a late bloomer. She couldn't swim until she was 26 and only learnt to drive at 27. Here's hoping her 12-year-old daughter Liv is a bit quicker off the mark.

JULIANNE WEARS SILK & VELVET DRESS, £4,570, BY **OSCAR DE LA RENTA**. LIV WEARS WOOL JUMPER, £435; SEQUIN SKIRT, £3,545; TIGHTS, £155, ALL BY **SAINT LAURENT BY HEDI SLIMANE**. BOOTS, LIV'S OWN

FOR STOCKISTS, SEE ADDRESS BOOK. HAIR BY DIDIER MALIGE. MAKE-UP BY AARON DE MEY FOR SEPHORA. SET DESIGN BY MARY HOWARD. WORDS BY LUCIANA BELLINI



Richard Branson with his children Sam and Holly in 1985

A SECOND HELPING OF BRANSONS

Think what you will of Sir Richard, but he has created two charming and grounded children who are loved by everyone from princes to pop stars. Matthew Bell on the new generation of Bransons

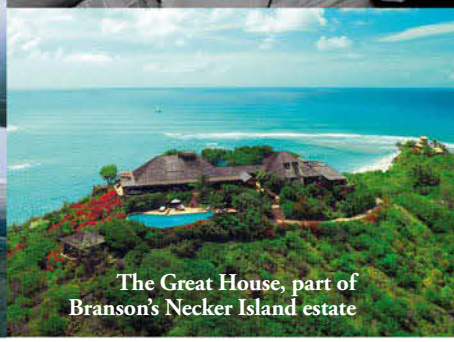
PHOTOGRAPHS: REX FEATURES, ALAN DAVIDSON, DAFYDD JONES, WIREIMAGE, GETTY IMAGES

Holly Branson and Sam Branson in London, 2013

Isabella Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe with Sam Branson, 2007

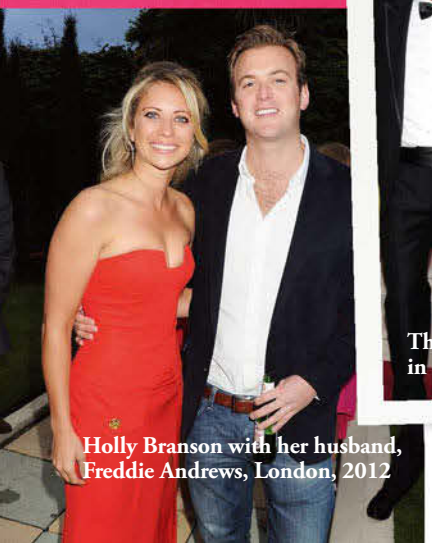
Branson and his wife Joan at the Roof Gardens in Kensington, 1981

Branson promoting Virgin Atlantic, 1996



The Great House, part of Branson's Necker Island estate

The Bransons in Dubai, 2008



Holly Branson with her husband, Freddie Andrews, London, 2012

MINUTES after Sir Richard Branson heard that his Virgin Galactic SpaceShipTwo had crashed, killing a pilot and disrupting an 11-year-old dream of putting the paying public into space, the 64-year-old billionaire was on a plane to the scene of the accident. There was nothing he could do, of course, and perhaps the last thing his team of 400 engineers needed was the boss turning up. But for Sir Richard, who created the £4bn Virgin empire from scratch, sitting back and switching off is never an option. 'We must push on,' he told Sky News three days later, giving an impassioned defence of Virgin Galactic while attacking the British press for carping about safety checks. 'There are incredible things that can happen through mankind exploring space.'

True, but only someone with his unwavering optimism could power on after a setback like that. He has vowed that Virgin Galactic will not fly commercially until he has been up with his family. This was a moment of typical Branson defiance. The Bransons are an extremely close-knit family, and whatever you think about Sir Richard, he has produced two beautiful, intelligent and charming children. To look at, Holly and Sam are every inch their father's children – blond, charming, confident. In spirit, they share his can-do attitude and love of adventure. But 2015 will be a year of big change: Holly is expecting twins in the spring, while Sam's wife, the actress Isabella Calthorpe, is due to have a baby about a month later.

The arrival of the Branson babies may highlight the differences that friends say already set Sir Richard apart from his children. While ▷

◁ he is all about winning and fighting and risk, Holly and Sam are altogether more *piano*. They are definitely interested in business, but they may not leap aboard a jet with quite the same gusto.

For Sir Richard, winning is everything. For his children, not so much. Both of them are competitive and sporty – Sam once went back to his position in the rugby scrum just months after a car crash left him with a broken vertebra and his skull needing to be stapled shut. But for Holly, 33, and Sam, 29, sport (and life) are just as much about camaraderie as about crushing their opponents. While Sir Richard has always cast himself as a maverick outsider, taking on stodgy institutions like British Airways and the UK rail system, his children represent a subtler, more evolved generation of Branson. If there is such a thing as the Establishment, Sam and Holly are part of it – trusted members of the royal inner circle, where discretion, loyalty and privacy are closely guarded.

For 10 years, Sir Richard has been trying to find a successor for Virgin. 'A company needs a face,' he once said. 'It benefits from a person. People identify with an individual. I think it strengthens it. If my children were interested in being that face, that would certainly take some weight off my shoulders.' Two years ago, he went further, telling the *Financial Times*: 'Virgin would definitely benefit if Holly or Sam were willing to be more of a face of it.' Both children have said they are interested in being more involved in Virgin – just not yet.

In the early days, Holly was Branson's chosen successor. Older by almost four years, she was also the steadier and brainier of the siblings, working hard to get a place at University College London to read paediatric medicine. Holly and Sam went to St Edward's School in Oxford, known as Teddies, a large mixed day and boarding school with a hearty – rather than academic – ethos. This is not a fashionable school, like Marlborough or Stowe (which Richard quit at 16 to launch his first business). Rather, it's one where close friendships are forged, populated by affluent but non-flashy county families from around Oxford. Both Holly and Sam made their best friends there. Holly later married former classmate Freddie Andrews. Tall, blond and classically handsome, he is described by friends as a loyal, straightforward type, with no pretensions or social ambitions. As Holly was, Freddie's sister Clemmie is a medical student, at Bristol.

When at UCL, Holly was determined to experience student life as normally as she could. In her first year, she lived in a single room in a hall of residence off Tottenham Court Road, instead of at her parents' 12-bedroom house in Holland Park. Fellow students remember Richard helping her to move in. Throughout their childhood, their mother, Joan, was determined that Holly and Sam should have as normal an upbringing as possible, and a lot of her Glaswegian working-class attitude has rubbed off on Holly, the sort of girl who prefers wearing tracksuits and mucking in to going out or wearing couture. At university, she would eat a full English breakfast in the canteen before spending the day in lectures with her fellow medics. In her second year, her parents bought her a house, but she was in charge of the admin: paying the bills and collecting the rent from her flatmates. Admittedly, holidays were spent in some luxury, but in term time Holly was no different from any other student, wearing jeans and jumpers and playing lacrosse and netball. Those were the early days of mobile phones, and one teammate remembers boasting of having secured a good deal with Vodafone before asking Holly who she was with. 'Um, Virgin,' came the embarrassed response. Holly is not into culture – she prefers sport and outdoor activities. Even her honeymoon was, by her own admission, 'ridiculously active': two weeks of trekking and white-water rafting through Costa Rica, ending up with a chance meeting with Al Gore, who invited the couple on a fact-finding mission to the Antarctic. 'Poor Freddie,' she later said. 'When everyone asks what the best bit of our honeymoon was, we always say the Antarctic trip, and that was the one bit he didn't plan.'

Holly liked the structure and discipline of medicine and completed her degree in 2007. But after a one-year placement at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, she decided to take a year off and in 2008 was persuaded by her father to take a job in Virgin Care, his foray into healthcare. According to Tom Bower, Richard Branson's biographer, Holly was not a hit within the company and lacked her father's business sense and leadership. Nevertheless, she has no current plans to go back to medicine, and has been increasingly involved in different parts of Virgin, becoming special projects manager at Virgin Management and sitting on the board of Virgin Unite, the charitable foundation that promotes causes such as tackling human-rights abuse and promoting fuel efficiency in the shipping industry. With Princess Eugenie and other friends, she set up her own charity for children, the Big Change.

Sam has been similarly determined to carve out his own path before entering Virgin, which, he says, is 'not a company – it's my family and I'm involved whether I like it or not'. He told an interviewer: 'When I've done my own thing and proved myself, followed my own path, then it will be a natural progression to go and work with Virgin.' His 'thing' has been his independent film-production company, Sundog Pictures, which has made some well-received documentaries on subjects such as global population growth and the war on drugs. 'As I got older, I got more engaged in social issues, more educated, and I thought, "Well, why don't I do something to try and set up a company that uses documentaries that do specifically that,"' he has said.

For a long time, whenever Sam's name appeared in print, it was alongside the word 'playboy'. One society girl who spent millennium night on Necker recalls thinking: 'He is the hottest boy I have ever seen.' But his reputation as a party animal belies a more sensitive and soulful nature. Friends say there is a serious and deeply caring side to him too, and describe him as 'passionate' and 'very emotional', and they also say he often cries during films. Yet for all his good looks and enviable prospects, he has had low moments. 'I definitely went through a period where I didn't know what I wanted to do – I was a bit disillusioned,' he told a US radio show last summer. 'As I've got older and learned more about what I'm interested in, and the areas I want to have an impact in, it's driving me more and more. I guess it's finding that thing that drives you, that everything

IF THERE'S SUCH A THING AS THE ESTABLISHMENT, SAM AND HOLLY BRANSON ARE PART OF IT

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALPHA PRESS, REX FEATURES, GETTY IMAGES

hangs off. Going on a three-month trip to the Arctic was definitely a catalyst – it had such a profound effect on me, it gave me an identity. It allowed me to be objective about life and gave me the self-confidence to go after what I want to do. Although the Arctic can seem quite monotonous... it made me appreciate what the world is and never to take for granted the magnificence of nature.'

Sam's escapades have also included a trek across Antarctica and a recent scaling of the Matterhorn, from which he had to be rescued by helicopter because he was suffering from altitude sickness. The night Sam was born, Richard was being fished out of the sea near the Scilly Isles by the Royal Navy after capsizing his speedboat during an attempt at the fastest crossing of the Atlantic. In his youth, Sam was more like Joan, who is completely risk-averse. 'She's really chilled, but the opposite to my dad,' he once said. 'She finds it scary getting in a car, let alone flying round the world in a balloon. And my dad's a crazy, lust-for-life person.' There was a time, in his youth, when Sam had a phobia of being kidnapped, and Joan was obsessive about keeping Sam and Holly out of the public eye.

Joan likes to keep a low profile and has remained steadfastly loyal to her husband, for all that he likes promoting his businesses sandwiched between two barely clothed blondes. Friends describe her as 'the ideal mother – always at the end of the phone, or on hand with advice, even about sex and relationships, or at home, cooking, cleaning and washing. She was always there for them while Richard was off crashing his hot-air balloons.' According to another family friend: 'Her mantra was that they should be protected from media attention until they were 18, and could make up their own minds after that.'

In this, the young Bransons were much like the young Princes William and Harry, whom they have known almost all their life. According to Tom Bower, it's no coincidence that they are all part of the same set. The seed was sown by Richard, who befriended Diana, Princess of Wales, and invited her to stay on Necker Island. When she took the princes there on holiday in 1989, it cemented what would become a long connection between the Bransons and the royals. She loved his can-do, freewheeling spirit; he was an entrepreneur with a business to promote. As Tom Bower says: 'Diana was photographed coming out of the gym wearing a Virgin T-shirt – that kind of publicity is worth millions.'

Bower is among those who are sceptical about Branson's plans to conquer space. Virgin Galactic has accepted more than £50m in deposits from about 700 passengers. Even before the crash on 31 October, there were doubts it would achieve lift-off in the spring of 2015, as Sir Richard had pledged. One British customer, who asked not to be identified, said he had doubts about whether Sir Richard's spacecraft would ever reach an altitude of 62 miles, the internationally accepted boundary (known as the Kármán line) between the atmosphere and outer space. The customer, who had paid a deposit of £90,000, said: 'I think it will fly, but I am not sure whether it will get me into space as I was promised. If they don't get above 62 miles, I will certainly be withdrawing my money. I don't think you can be considered an astronaut unless you cross that line.'

Bower also says that Branson has been winding down his business activities – something he vigorously denies. But there have been some fundamental changes in his life. He recently sold his Oxfordshire house to his children and has made Necker his main home. He has said that this is to look after his health, although the fact that you don't have to pay tax in the British Virgin Islands might have been an added inducement. Whatever the reason, he is now only allowed to spend a maximum of 183 days a year in Britain, meaning he has to run Virgin partly from the beach, or hand it over.

The problem with being the heir to Sir Richard Branson is that he's so tough to live up to. Holly is down to earth, hard-working and intelligent, but doesn't have his showmanship or flair. Sam is good-looking, charming and a people person, but he's not hungry for a deal. 'Sam has always been the more extrovert of the two and more of a player,' says someone who knows them both. 'Holly is more sensible, more academically rigorous. She's not startlingly original or brilliant, but she's very competent, and caring and kind. She's the opposite of a bitch. She's wholesome, and she married a solid, safe guy from back home in Oxford, not someone fashionable or famous. Sam is also really nice, but runs with a slightly faster set. He has changed and grown up in the past few years. He was a bit of a lad in his early 20s – he went out a lot, he wanted to run a nightclub. But he's much more mature now, determined to carve out his own path in making documentaries. They both know that they can't compete with Richard in business, but they can use what they've got to make a difference in the world, and they are genuinely passionate about that. With some people, charity work is all a bit of a show. With them, it's a family obsession.'

What's remarkable about Holly and Sam Branson is how likeable and well-rounded they have turned out. 'They just don't have any enemies,' says a friend. 'People react in very different ways to their dad, but I've never seen anyone not like Holly or Sam. They've got everything going for them, but they never show off about it. It's as if they've been aware of this incredible privilege from a very early age and are determined not to let it ruin them.' Another friend agrees: 'So many privileged children take a wrong turn and are spoiled by money or drugs or laziness. You really couldn't say that about Sam and Holly. They're incredibly nice and self-aware and good company – they just happen to have a crazy billionaire for a father.'

When Holly and Sam were children, their father made them a bet. Whoever could beat him at tennis before he turned 50 would win £1,000. But over the years, no matter how much training they put in, he has always beaten them. On his 50th birthday, he extended the cut-off to 60, and now, at 64, is considering keeping the offer open to 70. They may not be able to beat him at tennis, but of all the assets in Sir Richard's empire, his children are easily the most winning. □

Diana, Princess of Wales, with Princes Harry and William, Necker Island, 1990

With Diana on the flight deck of a Virgin Atlantic Airbus, 1993

A mock-up of Virgin Galactic SpaceShipTwo

Marie Curie Dog Day at Cleghorn Farm, Lanarkshire, 2011: *foreground, from left*, Jack, Bella and Molly

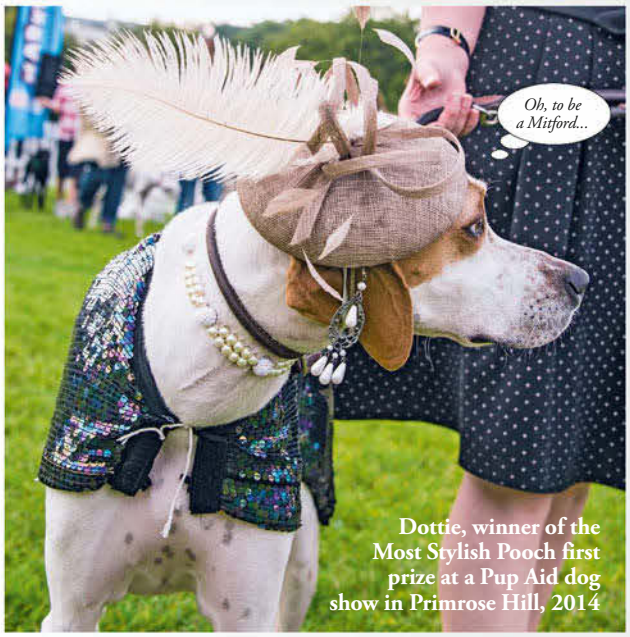
Honey, BeeBee and Blossom at the Belvoir Lodge Fun Dog Show, 2014

Chanel the chihuahua wins in the My Dog's Got Talent class at a Pup Aid event in Primrose Hill, 2014

Penny, the winner at the Belvoir Lodge Fun Dog Show, 2014

The Southern Dachshund Association's dog show, held in the grounds of Lord and Lady Emma Fellowes of West Stafford's home in Dorset, 2011

Below, Evelyn Holroyd, 97, and Molly, her 10-year-old bichon frisé, winner of first prize in the Dog Most Like Its Owner category, at the Battersea Dogs & Cats Home's Old Windsor Fun Day, 2014



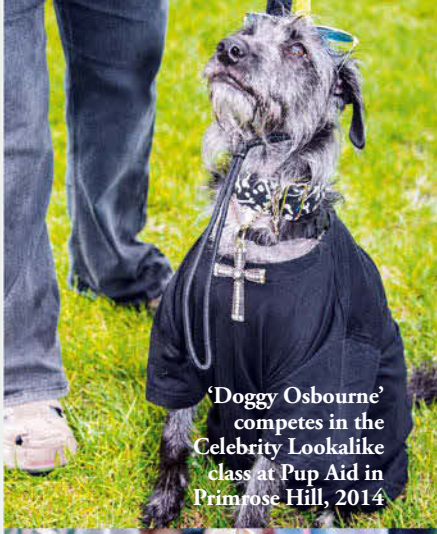
Dottie, winner of the Most Stylish Pooch first prize at a Pup Aid dog show in Primrose Hill, 2014

Imi and Daisy, third-prize winners in the Most Stylish Pooch category at a Pup Aid dog show in Primrose Hill, 2014

Christopher Simon Sykes with Digger, 2013

Every canine has a heart: the love-in continues at the Pug Dog Club Garden Party, 2014

Running like the wind at a Southern Dachshund Association show, 2014



'Doggy Osbourne' competes in the Celebrity Lookalike class at Pup Aid in Primrose Hill, 2014

Norman competes at the Pug Dog Club Garden Party at Wood Hall, 2014

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

For people who love their dogs more than life itself (that's us), there is no greater joy than standing in an English field and watching them compete with their furry peers. By Sophia Money-Coutts

'Us Primrose Hill bulldogs take our tutus seriously'

Where is it that you will find Britishness at its most concentrated and pure? Where will you find joy and disappointment, beauty and friendship? Where will you find a King Charles spaniel eating a string of sausages in under 30 seconds? The local British dog show, a soggy paradise of bunting, straw bales and Jack Russells dressed as sheep; found at country fetes, on village greens and in the gardens of private houses throughout the summer months.

The recipe for the ideal dog show is not complicated, but that is the point – for this is great British amateurism at its most sublime. 'We're a fun dog show, it's absolutely not like Crufts,' says the Dowager Duchess of Rutland, who has held a dog show in the undulating gardens of her lodge at Belvoir, in Leicestershire, for the past four years. 'It's the Dog with the Nicest Expression, that sort of thing.' Last September, her dog show had 30 categories – 'it gets bigger every year!' – which, unusually, included not only Best Six Legs but Best 10 Legs for Households with Two Dogs.

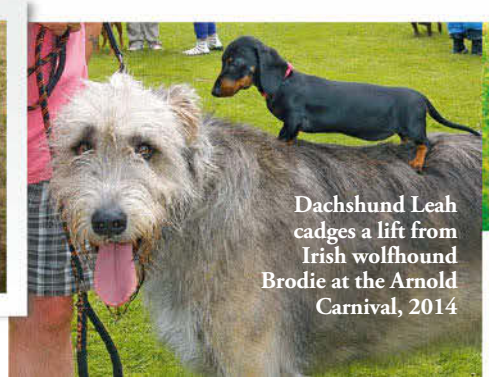
The cost of entry is generally about 50p per competition, and the stakes are comfortingly low. In 2011, Julian and Emma Fellowes, both dachshund obsessives, allowed the Southern Dachshund Association to hold a show in their garden in Dorset. The challenges included a 'dachshund agility course', with a three-inch hurdle, that proved too much for several entries, though the winner cleared the course in 29 seconds. In Berkshire, the Marsh family throws an annual show that once included a Black Labrador Only contest because one year there were 25 of them. 'They had to sit and stay in the ring while their owners walked backwards out of the ring away from them. Half of them scarpered instantly, but the proper gun dogs were very smug and stayed,' says Jane Marsh.

Of course, there is one rosette everyone covets: Dog Most Like Its Master. As part of their 50th-wedding anniversary celebrations in 2013, the late writer Candida Lycett Green and her husband Rupert held a dog show at their house in Oxfordshire, and author and photographer Christopher Simon Sykes and his Jack Russell, Digger, came third in this category. 'We are quite alike in character,' says Christopher. 'Mostly energetic and waggy-tailed, with the occasional touch of melancholy.' Man and dog, dog and man – it is an almost umbilical attachment that is as old as this island, and will endure as long as friendly folk gather in fields to watch their dearest companions jump through hoops. □

The Pug Dog Club Garden Party at Wood Hall, 2014

Poodling around at the Gelding Dog Show

Toby as Richard Gere in *An Officer and a Gentleman*, Horsey Island, 2012



Dachshund Leah cadges a lift from Irish wolfhound Brodie at the Arnold Carnival, 2014

HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER

So, all you need is a sheet of Perspex, some jolly paints and a bit of spare time

Photographed by WILL SANDERS

Illustrated by JOHN BOOTH

Styled by DEEP KAILEY

THIS PAGE, TOP, £495; SILK SKIRT, £920, BOTH BY **STELLA McCARTNEY**. LEATHER BAG, £2,000, BY **LOUIS VUITTON**. LEATHER BOOTS, £885, BY **SAINT LAURENT**

OPPOSITE PAGE, WOOL JUMPER, £1,300; SILK SHORTS, £430, BOTH BY **VALENTINO**. PLEXIGLASS & BRASS NECKLACE, £735, BY **STELLA McCARTNEY**. CANVAS BAG, £2,370, BY **LOUIS VUITTON**. LEATHER FLATS, £295, BY **JIMMY CHOO**

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SILK SHIRT, £670; COTTON TROUSERS, POA, BOTH BY **FENDI**. LEATHER CLUTCH, £595, BY **ANYA HINDMARCH**

SILK DRESS, POA, BY **DSQUARED2**. CALFSKIN SANDALS, £495, BY **TABITHA SIMMONS**. LEATHER CLUTCH, £595, BY **ANYA HINDMARCH**

JACKET, £3,550; TROUSERS, £1,370; SILK PUMPS, £870, ALL BY **LOUIS VUITTON**

WOOL JACQUARD KNIT DRESS, £1,260; CRYSTAL EARRINGS, £1,182, BOTH BY **CELINE**

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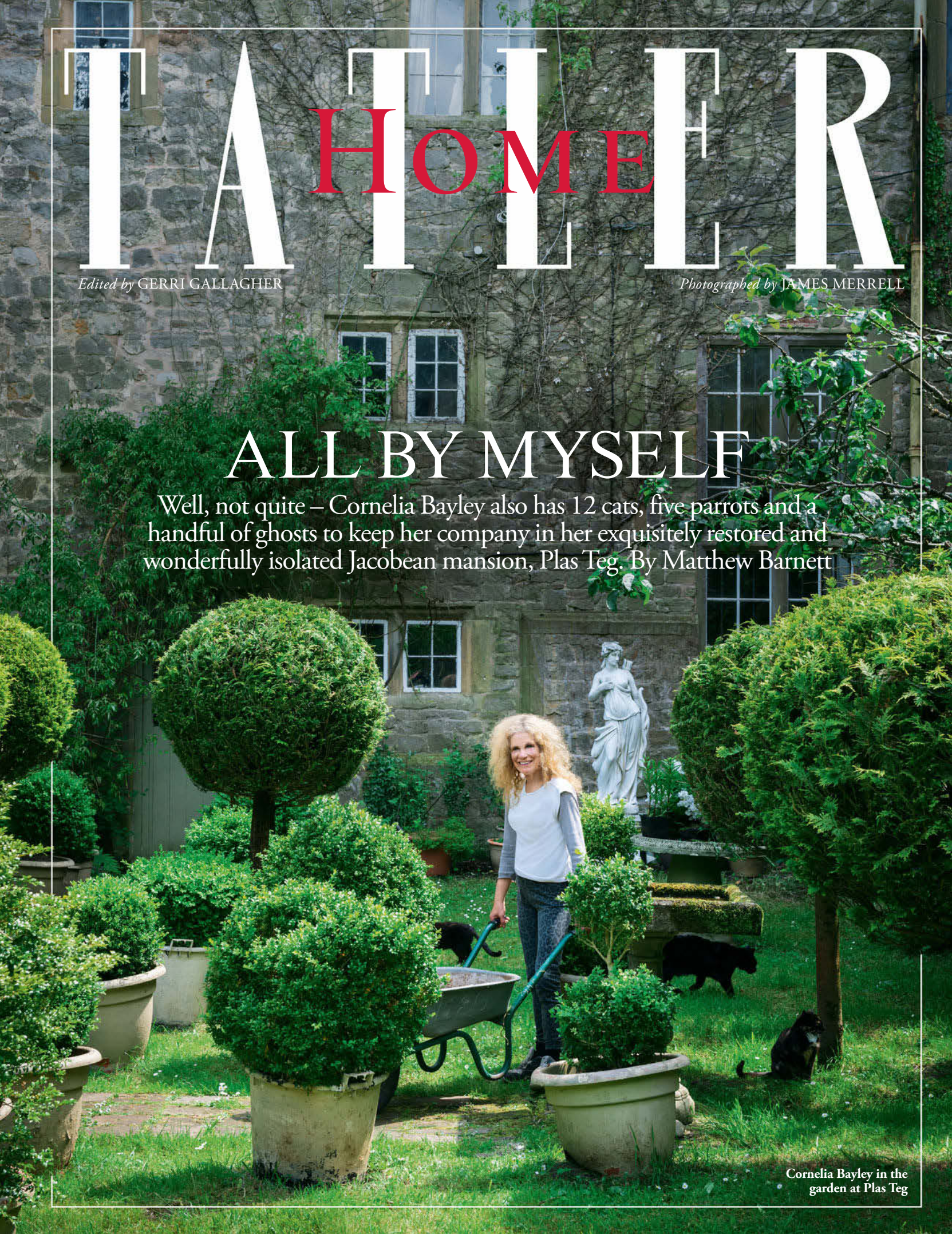
TATLER HOME

Edited by GERRI GALLAGHER

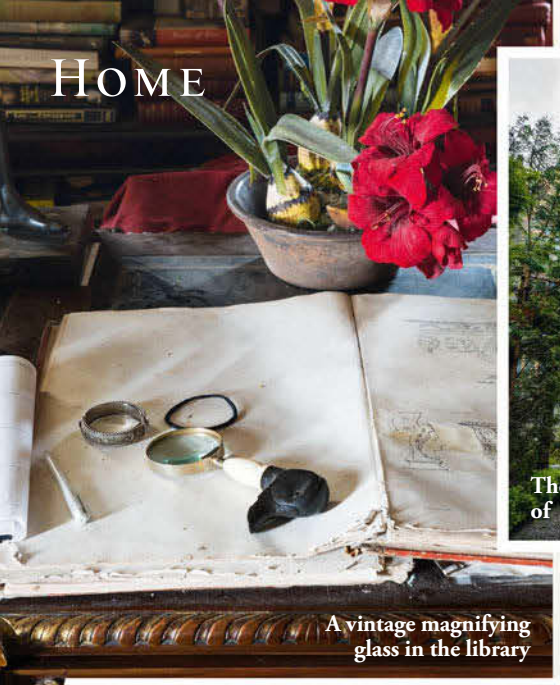
Photographed by JAMES MERRELL

ALL BY MYSELF

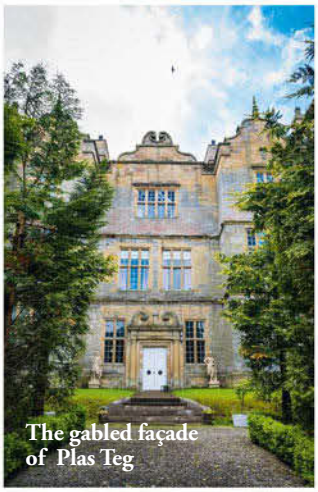
Well, not quite – Cornelia Bayley also has 12 cats, five parrots and a handful of ghosts to keep her company in her exquisitely restored and wonderfully isolated Jacobean mansion, Plas Teg. By Matthew Barnett



Cornelia Bayley in the garden at Plas Teg



A vintage magnifying glass in the library



The gabled façade of Plas Teg

Cornelia Bayley claims she's only ever had two true loves in her life: one a multimillionaire publisher (who shall remain nameless), and the other Plas Teg – the Jacobean mansion she encountered nearly 30 years ago.

It is almost impossible to capture the *genius loci* that inhabits this most magical and romantic of houses, but its spirit is tangible. Shrouded by beeches and framed against a wooded hillside, the grey gabled outline, with its distinctive corner turrets, rises like a ghost from the mists of the Alyn Valley near Mold, in North Wales. Indeed, it is said that there are many ghosts in the house – so many, in fact, that paranormal societies pay for the privilege of visiting. Not surprising, perhaps, when one considers that a ground-floor room was used for hanging traitors at the time of Judge Jeffreys. When Bayley first lived there alone, she remembers, she often heard footsteps on the stairs and other noises for which there was no logical explanation. 'But I don't experience anything now,' she says, 'it has a really lovely atmosphere.'

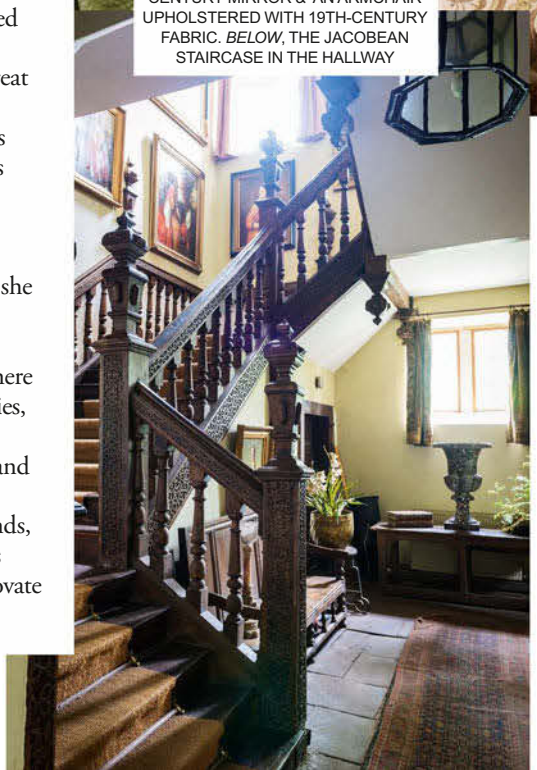
Whatever atmosphere Plas Teg now has is undoubtedly due to Bayley. Originally commissioned and built around 1610 by Sir John Trevor, who was Surveyor of the Queen's Ships under Elizabeth I and an MP in the reign of James I, it is one of the finest and best-preserved Jacobean houses in the country – but it might not have been.

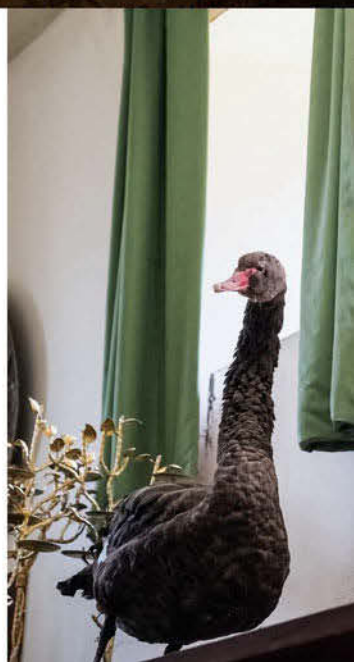
By the Fifties, following years of neglect, the house was under threat of demolition. A distant relation of the Trevor family briefly took charge and carried out essential repairs. Despite this, by the Eighties its future was again looking bleak, at which point Bayley first set eyes on what she's described as 'a ruinous but utterly beautiful house'.

It truly was in a terrible state. 'For the previous nine years a schoolteacher had been living in two rooms, grass and trees were growing in the house and there was a virtual river in the main hall,' she recalls in her clipped, antique tones. 'At times I thought the whole project was insane, but I just knew I had to see it through.'

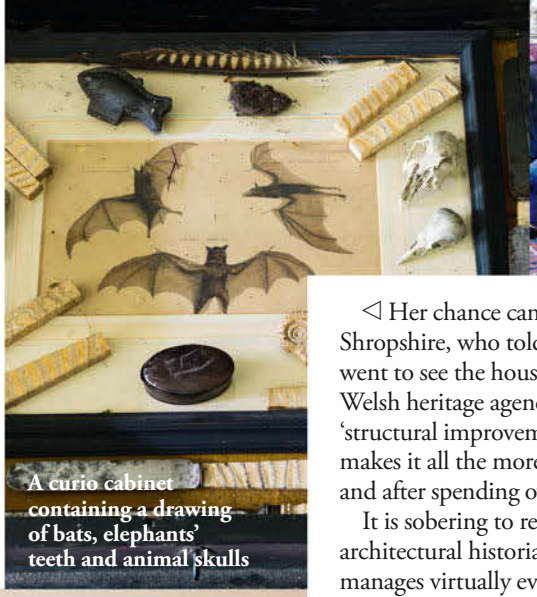
The 72-year-old Bayley began her career at Colefax and Fowler, where she specialised in painting and gilding furniture and restoring tapestries, working for the Rothschilds, the Devonshires and Sir Tatton Sykes. The experience provided her with a firm grounding in objets d'art and she opened an antique stall on the Portobello Road. Hers was the beau monde of Sixties London, where she made many lifelong friends, including such art-world luminaries as Christopher Gibbs. Life was fun and fast, but her wish had 'always been to buy a great house, renovate it and fill it with furniture'. ▷

ABOVE, AN EARLY-19TH-CENTURY MASONIC FLORAL JUG, AN 18TH-CENTURY MIRROR & AN ARMCHAIR UPHOLSTERED WITH 19TH-CENTURY FABRIC. *BELOW*, THE JACOBEAN STAIRCASE IN THE HALLWAY





LEFT, STUFFED GEESE. *RIGHT*, THE PANELLED ROOM



A curio cabinet containing a drawing of bats, elephants' teeth and animal skulls

An early-19th-century English daybed in the main hall

ABOVE, 19TH-CENTURY CHINA. *BELOW*, A RARE 19TH-CENTURY BATHTUB

◁ Her chance came in 1985, while she was visiting friends in Shropshire, who told her about Plas Teg and its frail condition. She went to see the house and, within 24 hours, had bought it for £75,000. Welsh heritage agency Cadw provided a grant of £195,000 towards 'structural improvements', but the challenge remained immense. Which makes it all the more extraordinary that, a mere 11 months later, and after spending over £400,000, she opened Plas Teg to the public.

It is sobering to reflect that Bayley – artist, collector, gardener, architectural historian and maverick that she is – single-handedly manages virtually every aspect of this great house, together with its two and a half acres of gardens. She has personally created every room, supervised every fitting and commissioned every artwork – from the enormous reproductions of paintings by Veronese and other masters that hang in the entrance hall, to the magnificent chandeliers and furniture.

When I meet her, she is fresh from the garden and a struggle with her minuscule electric lawnmower, which, she informs me, has 'blown up'. With her shock of unruly hair, her small and wiry frame and her face half hidden by grass cuttings and loam, she is like some fantastic, druidical apparition. Her fingers are swollen from endless weeding and she complains that she is no longer able to do needlework, which she loved. She points out a makeshift hedge at the end of her drive, comprising interlocked fir trees that she has chopped down and dragged to the far side of the garden. As I help her lug another freshly chopped tree across, she explains it's 'to keep the cows out'.

We begin our tour of the house with a cup of tea in her private kitchen, which is a veritable melee of piled porcelain, broken kettles, opaque Georgian drinking glasses, nameless culinary curiosities and cats (there are 12 of them – the chief of whom appears to be Marwood, named after a former boyfriend). There are also five parrots, which shriek when they are hungry.

Passing through the dining room, its Georgian table laid with 18th-century glass and bone-handled cutlery, Bayley explains that the chairs are on loan from her friend, antiques dealer Lennox Money. Above the fireplace, a reproduction of a Peter Lely portrait of Margaret Hughes, mistress of Prince Rupert of the Rhine, gazes down saucily.

We re-enter the main hall and admire a set of rare, unusually wide chairs, covered in blue velvet, that once belonged to a princess of Hyderabad, before walking up the splendid early-16th-century staircase to the main landing and through to the Great Chamber. Plas Teg's grandest room, fit for the most distinguished company, it spans the entire house and is lit from either end. There are a set of chairs by Henry Holland, daybeds by Thomas Hope and a remarkable copy of a celebrated pink sofa whose original resides at Hatfield House. Bayley

ABOVE, TWO 19TH-CENTURY TURKISH ARMCHAIRS IN THE LIBRARY (WHICH IS ALSO SEEN BELOW)

The dining room

An Anglo-Indian Regency couch in the Coral Bedroom

also shows me a set of Sheraton dining chairs – the first antiques she bought, when she was 17.

Her favourite room is the library, which is crammed with valuable books on art, horticulture and architecture, its decor a richly red confection of Empire furniture, including a fine set of Irish George III library chairs. The chandelier, which looks remarkably original, she made herself. A dusty, unused laptop sits beneath a widescreen television. An incorrigible technophobe, she says that a close friend deals with all of her emails and, as for her mobile: 'It's a mystery!'

There are 10 bedrooms, three on the first floor, the others leading off a long, statue-filled gallery on the top floor, all richly furnished and decorated with original four-poster beds, exquisite furniture, carpets and a bewildering array of porcelain. The Panelled Room is particularly striking: it contains rare Dutch 17th-century panelling – given to her by Christopher Gibbs – curiously inlaid with small mirrors.

From the open doorway of another bedroom, a full-sized reproduction of a portrait of the notorious rake and Restoration poet John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester, stares out of the gloom, with a manuscript in his left hand and his monkey having the last laugh.

'I've always been happiest on my own,' explains Bayley over yet more tea. 'Which is why I've never managed to remain married or stay in a relationship. I don't really have any interest in the outside world. Quite frankly, I don't like it out there.'

And she means it. Apart from a very few select friends, the odd visitor and her menagerie, she lives a solitary life. 'Almost all my old friends have died off, quite a few of them from AIDS. And it's so isolated here, just too far for most people to travel.'

They're missing something. Looking up and into the gloom, I see a strange object perched on a ledge. It's a headless pheasant. 'Oh that', she laughs. 'I'm afraid my parrot Elie bit its head off.' □

Plas Teg (01352 771335) is open to the public on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays. Private guided tours may be arranged on application.

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TATLER BEAUTY

Edited by FRANCESCA WHITE

TIME TO... PLAY IT COOL

We all have secret stores of fat. Fat that no amount of circuits or carb-swerving will shift. Instead, we disguise it artfully, we conceal it from prying eyes: bottoms skimmed by swirling skirts; hips slimmed with sharp tailoring. We're so good at hiding it that launching a full-on fat-busting assault would be futile. Right?

Wrong. Because there's a stealthier way to get rid of surplus flab, and it comes in the form of Malvina Fraser's shiny CoolSmooth device. Like its CoolSculpting precursor, CoolSmooth freezes fat cells, killing them off without damaging any of the surrounding tissue (or skin). The difference here is the applicator. While the CoolSculpting vacuum works by sucking wobbly bits into its icy, cavernous jaws, the CoolSmooth plate simply sits there quietly – comfortably, even. Malvina doesn't need to feed it a sizeable, grabbable heft of your thigh – even the most thinly spread layer of fat across your middle, back or saddlebags can be frozen into submission. Yes, it takes a little longer than before... but four hours to yourself? Think of all the box sets you could catch up on. More to the point, think of the *results*. One session on, things seem tighter, more toned. Three months down the line and you're looking at a 23 per cent reduction in fat, says Malvina. FOR GOOD. (So long as you stick to a healthy diet, mind.) Best of all, there's no downtime. No redness or bruising or bandages to give the game away. So your clever endeavour can stay firmly under wraps – even if the rest of you doesn't. ***FW***

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PHOTOGRAPH: PIXELEYES PHOTOGRAPHY. ICE-LOLLY MOULD BY MIDTON ACRYLICS (MIDTONACRYLICS.CO.UK)

Don't look down!

Before you resort to the Prozac (or any other pills), why don't you try one of these exhilarating natural highs first? They might just give you the boost you need

TRAPEZE

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's you

Walking up the ladder to the skinny platform high above the safety net is the first challenge. I am bricking it by the third rung. And humming – the higher I go, the louder I hum. I'm at the Wilderness festival (aka Poshstock) with a GoPro camera attached to my head like a miner's torch (my husband insisted this *had* to be filmed), hair protruding in all directions. I'm charged: eyes on stalks, gabbling like a nutter. I look like I'm on something. I *feel* like I'm on something.

I am – utter, unadulterated adrenalin. Because I have vertigo, the kind that has made me exit – on my belly, commando-style – outdoor events held somewhere too high for my liking. But somehow, maybe because of the unabashed abandonment of festival fever, I have volunteered to do the trapeze. And if there wasn't a crowd of breakfasting hipsters sitting on hay bales below, and if I wasn't so damn proud, I'd be parked on a hay bale too.

An annoyingly relaxed, toned-to-high-heaven 'regular flyer' (it's a great workout) is waiting for me. 'Remember the practice drill?' she says, more as a statement than a question (we've had one piddly go on a low-hanging swing minutes earlier.) 'OK!' she instructs (in a don't-bottle-on-me-in-front-of-all-these-people kind of way), 'LEAN forward, GRAB the swing, WAIT for your count-in.' *Lean*? Over a dizzyingly high drop, to grab a swing? Safety harness or not, this is my idea of hell.

I break the golden rule and look down. My six-year-old daughter is beaming expectantly; my husband, more forcefully; the crowd, nonchalantly. So I lean, I grab, I jump, I swoop, I SWOOP? Yes, I swoop, and I point my toes like a pro. I tuck my legs to my chin, thread my legs up and over the bar, holding on by the back of my legs for dear life. Then I fall backwards – yes, *backwards* – so that I'm swinging, upside-down, arms straight as pencils (all this while I'm moving, people!).

And then the crowd roars. My daughter cheers and my husband is whooping like a Yank. I'm elated, proud as Punch. Vertigo, shmertigo! Call it determination, call it the exhibitionist in me, but while I was up there, I forgot all my fears, all my worries, as I flew through the air with the greatest of ease: me, a daring young(ish) woman on the flying trapeze... ***Suzanne Duckett***

Flying Trapeze with Gorilla Circus (Regent's Park, Battersea Park and the Sanctuary by Wild Wellbeing), from £28 (gorillacircus.com).

PSYCLE

Bikes, action, music

I am not a natural cyclist. One of my earliest memories is of careering down a hill on a tiny lilac bicycle, a flimsy pair of stabilisers doing nothing to check my increasing momentum. Twenty-five years on, my knees still bear the scars. A recent encounter with a Boris bike involved drifting aimlessly around Hyde Park Corner, minus a helmet. I narrowly avoided a bus. So the idea of working out on a stationary bike held as much appeal as bear baiting. Until, that is, I stumbled into Psycle.

The thing about Psycle is that it's actually rather deceptive. You turn up – reluctantly – dreading what the next 45 minutes has in store. You spot the rows of bicycles, amassed like some sort of battalion of physical torture. Panic sets in. You strap your feet into weird, cleated shoes and heave yourself onto the bike, exhausted before you even begin. The lights go down, the air-con cranks up. But then the music starts.

And something strange happens. The beat – pulsing through the studio, as strips of light shoot across the ceiling – transports you. Yes, you're pedalling at a punchy pace, you're turning the resistance dial up and down and trying desperately to keep up with the other Lycra-clad people around you. But the playlist is motivational in a way that really, *genuinely*, works. You're immersed, and when a track builds to a crescendo, so do your energy levels. (Luckily, your feet are clipped in, otherwise you'd likely propel yourself over the handlebars). A remix of a familiar tune comes on, and though your thighs are screaming and your breath is coming in sharp bursts and your arms have turned to blancmange from countless triceps dips, you forge ahead. It's not just that you don't want to be the first to give up, it's that you're distracted from exhaustion, carried on a wave of explosive tunes, as gritty as you'd hear at an Ibiza closing party. It's not that you can't stop – it's that you don't want to.

So I bopped about happily, lifting weights and lungeing to the side, clapping my hands and throwing myself about in semi-darkness. This was light years away from a boring old spinning class. It was like being in a club. Like dancing *on* your bike. I even forgot that I was cycling. I dismounted 45 minutes later, sweaty but euphoric, and feeling as high as a kite. I will be returning shortly for another fix. ***Francesca White***

Single class, £20; five classes, £95. At Psycle, 76 Mortimer Street, W1 (psyclelondon.com; 020 3728 6990).

HUNTING

The call of the wild

I've dived with great white sharks, I've done my Class As, I've ridden at 150mph on a Honda Fireblade and I can tell you right now: none of it comes even close to the thrill of galloping at breakneck speed, dressed like an 18th-century gentleman and half-pissed on sloe gin and cherry brandy, on a horse so crazed with hunt lust you can't control it, surrounded by up to 100 fellow lunatics, in full pursuit of a pack of hounds across the matchlessly beautiful English landscape.

Some say it's about as close as you can get to combat without actually going to war. When you're out hunting, you are living totally in the moment. Everything hurtles at you in an overwhelming sensory rush, so vividly that, even 15 years on, I can remember every last detail of my first day's hunting – over Exmoor, with the Devon and Somerset Staghounds. It's as intense as an acid trip, only it's happening for real.

Yes, it's quite dangerous, but you try not to dwell on that too much. That's what the drinks at the meet are for – and the flasks that everyone carries for those long periods of hanging around waiting for stuff to happen. (Like war, hunting is 95 per cent boredom, 5 per cent pure terror.) Once you've got your first gallop out of the way, the nerves settle. But the build-up is horrid: some people are so sick with anxiety that they throw up.

This, though, is why I so love folk who hunt. They're in it for lots of reasons – family tradition, the huntsman's craft, the working of the hounds, the extraordinary bond you have with your mount (which, for the duration of the hunt, is dearer to you than your spouse) and the camaraderie redolent of a late-Eighties rave – only with everyone on horseback. But what unites them above all is this: every one of them is a mad adrenalin junkie; every one of you, no matter what your class or background or riding ability, is on the same trip.

So I guess it's no wonder that hunting folk spend so much time shagging one another. It's the inevitable consequence of an intensely physical activity – redolent of leather, booze and horse sweat – pursued by heroic risk-takers, their firm arses accentuated by tight jodhpurs, determined to live every day as if it were their last. Because if you're crazy enough to go out hunting, it just might be. ***James Delingpole***

To find your local hunt, contact the Masters of Foxhounds Association (mfha.co.uk; 01285 653001).

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL SHERWOOD

YOUR INSIDES

What **Colonic hydrotherapy**
The lowdown If you've got issues with 'going', a colonic might help. Not only does therapist Victoria get things moving as they should – by means of a (slim and not uncomfortable) tube and gallons of purer-than-Evian water – but she explains the 'system' like an enthusiastic schoolteacher. After an in-depth description of how food gets from A (your mouth) to B (your exit), you don a fetching backless gown and she snaps to it, shooting water into your colon, kickstarting the muscles in your gut and dislodging any old rubbish. Thirty-five minutes of filling and flushing, and you're done.
Our verdict No emergencies: just quicker, calmer and more comfortable digestion.
Details From £125 for 75 minutes. At EF Medispa Kensington, 193 Kings Road, SW3 (efmedispa.com; 020 3411 5931).

YOUR BLOODSTREAM

What **Reviv Megaboost**
The lowdown Sometimes, no matter how much water you glug, you never feel properly hydrated. So try changing tack. Reviv (their clinics originated in Las Vegas, Miami Beach and New York) will have you hooked up to a drip in nanoseconds to recharge and reboot your system. Pitch up and you'll spy a bag of what looks like Lucozade (in reality, a litre of salt water with B vitamins, electrolytes and antioxidants) ready to be pumped into your bloodstream. Into the crook of your arm goes a cannula (notice the vampire-like glee when the doctor spots a 'good' vein), in goes the fluid (expect it to feel chilly) and then you're left for half an hour until the bag is empty and the fluid absorbed.
Our verdict Expect to wee A LOT in the next few hours. But the benefits are manifold: energy levels skyrocket, whites of eyes light up, even muscle cramps cease.
Details £199 for 30 minutes. At Fabulous Face and Body, 1 Harley Street, W1 (020 3651 0975; revivme.com).

Treatments
FEEL FLUSH

It's the time of year for a purge

YOUR SKIN

PICK ME!

What **Eve Lom Signature Facial at Agua Spa**
The lowdown This is not the facial that you're expecting. Eve Lom (the woman herself!) is charmingly eccentric but astoundingly brilliant. So you'll be lying there, shrouded in crisp linen sheets, and she'll be talking nineteen to the dozen – about philosophy, about skin – before lapsing into a long period of silence as she holds your head in her hands, feeling for imbalances. Then she'll throw out a statement like 'It's your coccyx – do you slump at your desk?' or 'What's going on emotionally? Your stomach is in knots.' She'll address the things that are taking their toll, delving around your abdomen, prodding and pinching, and then she'll do a damn good facial: paraffin wax, muslin-buffing and zealous extractions. Because, she argues, how can you expect your skin to be in good nick if your body isn't?
Our verdict Weird and diagnostic and deeply unnerving. But you and your skin will leave feeling as clean as a whistle.
Details £220 for 150 minutes. At Agua, Sanderson, 50 Berners Street, W1 (morganshotelgroup.com; 020 7300 1414).

YOUR PORES

What **Infrared sauna**
The lowdown Did you know that an infrared sauna makes you sweat SEVEN times more than a normal one? That you can burn up to 600 calories per session? That it reduces blood pressure? That your skin is your largest organ and that, actually, all that sweat might do you some good? No? Then you need to get over to HB Health. Here, you'll find a freakishly small box, heated to a whopping 48°C. Shuffle in, sit down and wait. If you're hoping for epic instant sweating, you'll be disappointed – it takes half an hour to get going. But when the sweat does eventually start pouring, the gratification is immense.
Our verdict If you can hold out for a 45-minute stint, do. If you can do this every day for a week (recommended), we salute you.
Details From £39 for 30 minutes. At HB Health of Knightsbridge, 12 Beauchamp Place, SW3 (hbhealthofknightsbridge.co.uk; 020 7838 0765).

YOUR GUT

What **Purearth cleanse**
The lowdown Although there are one million juice cleanses jostling for space in our fridge, Purearth is hands-down the best. Drinks (like Morning Energise – with fennel, spinach and parsley) are cold-pressed so they don't lose any of their nutrients. The people here listen when you say that you hate celery (and will remove it from your bottles). They send an itinerary that's so simple a monkey could decipher it, plus aloe drinks, teas and Epsom salts. And they're flexible, so puritans can brave the two-week plan and novices can do three days, but everyone can feel smug in their own way.
Our verdict Come out the other side with a trim waist, clear skin and a spring in your step. What could be better?
Details Three-day cleanse, from £240 (purearth.co.uk).

PHOTOGRAPH: EVE ARNOLD/MAGNUM PHOTOS

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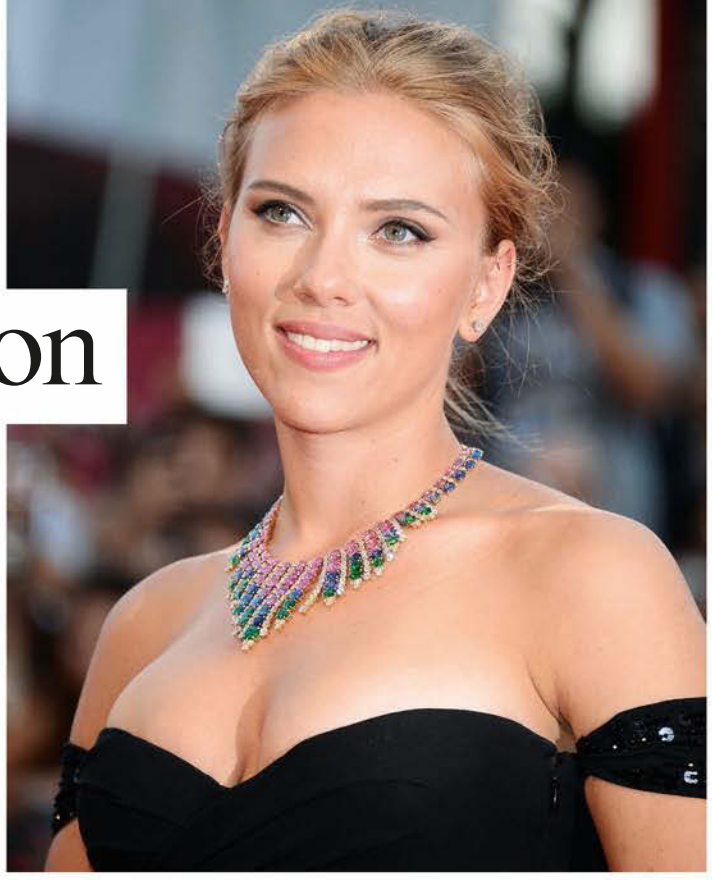
THE MAKE-UP OF MAKE-UP ARTISTS

My close-up Scarlett Johansson

From 10-minute make-up routines to red-carpet looks – Miss Scarlett's secrets. By Katie Thomas



If you LOOK CLOSELY AT MY TEETH, you'll see that I did not wear braces. My teeth are totally crooked!

It takes me 10 minutes to do my make-up. I don't leave the house with a full face, just tinted moisturiser, eyeshadow and mascara. NO FALSE EYELASHES on an average day – I'd probably blind myself.

I don't eat dairy, so I always have Coffee-Mate in my fridge. I have to sneak it through customs when I go abroad!

I go through breakfast phases. I eat the same thing for months, then change, but I LOVE EGGS.

I've worked with PAT McGRATH, above left, for five years. The first time was on a Dolce & Gabbana campaign. She's wonderful – warm and a great comic.

Whole Foods

+

Trader Joe's

+

La Grande Epicerie de Paris

=

WHERE I BUY MY GROCERIES

SCENT TRIGGERS OUR MEMORY. I remember smelling my mother's fragrance and knowing immediately that she had been in the room.

7KG

I've tried pilates and yoga, but I prefer regular circuit training with my trainer. I like to have a buddy.

I can't do anything with my hair, it drives me crazy. Every couple of years I get to the point where I'm, like, 'Just cut it all off!' That's why I RECENTLY WENT FOR THE CHOP. I also change my shampoo every few months. I'm either using Oribe or a random drugstore brand.

Red-carpet make-up looks

Scarlett is the face of Dolce & Gabbana The One Fragrance and Perfect Mono Intense Cream Eye Colour

SNOW BUSINESS

PURIST VS TOURIST

KRISTIANIA, LECH

Yes, Lech is a pretty place, nestled in the Austrian Alps, groaning under the weight of schnitzel and glühwein. But you're here to get your ski fitness up: crack-of-dawn training sessions – lunges, squats and boxing in the forest – with Bernd Osterle, seven-time world fitness champion (finish off with barefoot running in the powder); one-to-one ski instruction (to get you carving better); and low-fat grub back at the wooden-beamed Kristiania Hotel (local venison with wild mushrooms, anyone?). And the fabulously retro spa does a cracking deep-tissue massage. *The Oxford Ski Company offers seven nights from £3,380 a person, including meals, training massage, flights to Zurich and transfers (oxfordski.com).*

LODGE PARK, MEGEVE

It was pretty fabulous to begin with, but the spa here at the tartan-clad, log-fired, deeply cosy Lodge Park has grown. Now there's a herbal sauna (breathe deeply), a steamy hammam (grab a loofah and scrub yourself silly) and a spanking-new slate-tiled pool. The skiing (practically on your doorstep) is awesome and the mountain views are jaw-dropping. But what could be better after a day on the slopes than collapsing on a fur-covered bed, having your limbs pulled in every direction and being massaged with warm poultices of Himalayan salt? Nothing. *Flexiski offers three nights at £975 a person (based on two sharing), including breakfast, flights from Gatwick and private transfer (flexiski.com).*

PURIST VS TOURIST WORDS BY HANNAH BRENCHLEY & FRANCESCA WHITE. PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES, REX FEATURES, WIREIMAGE, SHUTTERSTOCK

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During the procedure you may experience deep pulling, tugging, pinching, numbness, or discomfort. Following the procedure, typical side effects include temporary numbness, redness, swelling, bruising, firmness, tingling, stinging, and pain. Rare side effects may also occur. The CoolSculpting procedure is not for everyone. You should not have the CoolSculpting procedure if you suffer from cryoglobulinemia or paroxysmal cold hemoglobinuria. The CoolSculpting procedure is not a treatment for obesity. As with any medical procedure, ask your physician if the CoolSculpting procedure is right for you.

Results and patient experience may vary. Patients shown are within +/- 5 lbs of their original weight unless specified.
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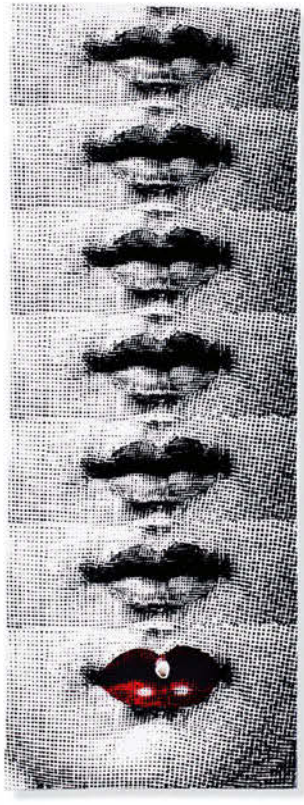
Beauty flash
HOME IMPROVEMENT

Add some aroma to your abode, says Francesca White

ACQUA DI PARMA

Murano Candle in Linden, £90, at Harrods
They say 'An elegant outfit for home environments.'
We say What looks like a liquorice allsort but smells of Italian gardens? ADP's joyful new candle in a Murano-glass tumbler, of course.



FREDERIC MALLE

Fleur Mécanique, £170
They say 'A bouquet of flowers upon request.'
We say One press of a button and this metal box will billow scent across the room in the quickest (and most pleasing) way. Never loses its appeal.

FORNASETTI

Bacio incense box, £145
They say 'Transcends time, season, gender and borders.'
We say It also produces the most nose-tickling waft of wood to make your home smell warm and cosy. Plus, that ceramic-lidded box blows boring old hippie incense burners out of the water.

JARDINS D'ECRIVAINS

Shaman Beat Generation, £60
They say 'The most powerful of herbs for cleansing.'
We say These aromatic leaves make for an excellent talking point. Throw on the fire and watch as they shrivel to embers, leaving a cloud of sagey smoke in their wake.

CIRE TRUDON

Room spray in Abd El Kader, £159
They say 'No expense spared.'
We say That's because Cire Trudon's greeny-goldy glass atomisers are eye-wateringly pricey. But the scents, like Moroccan mint tea, are transporting.

AESOP

Post-poo drops, £20
They say 'To combat the malodorous.'
We say The usefulness of these aniseed-smelling drops should not be underestimated. Position next to the loo and hope they are used.

JO MALONE

Box Hedge square scent, £40
They say 'Borders in an English garden.'
We say Which is exactly what this block of rubber incense smells like. It's too chic to shove in your knicker drawer... but do it anyway.

DIPTYQUE

Oiseau fragrance diffuser, £100
They say 'An evocative form with the power to perfume.'
We say Top marks to Diptyque for producing a diffuser that you actually want to have on display. Fill the base with any of their scents – Baies, Figuier or Feu de Bois – and breathe deeply.

STILL-LIFES: JODY TODD

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TATLER BYSTANDER

Social editor TIBBS JENKINS

Photographer HUGO BURNAND

TOOT-TOOT! HERE COME THE BRIDES...

ABIGAIL O'NEILL AT DANIELLE & GEMMA ROLLS-BENTLEY WILDE'S WEDDING CELEBRATIONS. TURN THE PAGE FOR MORE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DARREN GERRISH

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DANIELLE & GEMMA ROLLS-BENTLEY WILDE

RUARIDH EMSLIE

ORLA McCOURT

JAIME HALL

WOMEN IN LOVE

Two glamorous gals tie the knot

Harp-throb **Alexander Thomas** gently serenaded arriving guests with Disney tunes at **Gemma Rolls-Bentley** and **Danielle Wilde**'s wedding in Peckham. But the tempo was cranked up once the vows had been exchanged. The congregation was bundled onto two buses – one playing only the Spice Girls, the other the Vengaboys – and deposited in a specially installed Jägerbomb bar at Big Red in Deptford. There were headstands, 'lungeing' competitions and, once **Granny Ann** had left, the brides' two dress designers stripped off and danced naked for the rest of the night. Start as you mean to go on, we say.

Photographed by DARREN GERRISH

JAMES READ & CLEMMIE COOKE

ABIGAIL O'NEILL & IAN BRUCE

NICK SILVER & TARA PEACH

Beatrice Mocci, Roxanne Horton and Amie Corry

SCARLETT TOLL & KONSTANZE KLECHA

DANIELLE & GEMMA ROLLS-BENTLEY WILDE

BROOKE PALMIERI & ALICE CULLINGWORTH

FIONTAN MORAN

JASPER TAYLOR & SOPHIE PENNICK

GEORGE CAMPBELL, JACK SEVERN & HUGO MELVIN

GUS DE FERRANTI & PLUM SCHRAGER

BOTTOMS UP

Birthday suits at a birthday bash in Hampshire

There were Singapore Slings, there was Thai green curry, there was dancing to 'Kung Fu Fighting' – there was no doubting the Asian theme of **Isabella St Aubyn** and **Rowland Graham**'s joint 18th-birthday party in Hampshire. It was all so exciting, in fact, that **Xander Slager**, **Oliver Severn** and **Joe Brockbank** stripped off and jumped into the lake to greet the rising sun.

Photographed by PIERS ALLARDYCE

ASTRID & JAMES FINDLAY

ANNABEL EDEN & ISABELLA ST AUBYN

ANTHEA GRAHAM & ROLAND GRAHAM

Clemmie Melvin and James White

AMY DUNSTAN & ALEX HAUGER

BEL LAWTON

ELLIOT KHALIL & JACK SIEFF

GATSBY REINCARNATED

...as two 18-year-old boys

Croque-monsieurs and a Sex on the Beach: we can now pronounce this the ultimate power breakfast. The revivifying combination made its first appearance at 2am at **Elliot Khalil** and **Jack Sieff**'s Gatsby-themed joint 18th-birthday party at Tramp. **Flynn Busson**, **Finn Constantine** and **Arina Berezovsky** wolfed down the early-morning delights, while birthday boy Jack proved himself to be a bit of a multitasker – not only did he manage to keep his Panama hat on all night, he never once dropped his cane or his Parisian girl.

Photographed by ED LLOYD OWEN

BELLE PORTER & CHESSIE PEAKE

JENNY HALPERN PRINCE & HAYLEY SIEFF

HELENA ROGERS

KIKI KARAYIANNIS

MARCUS SIEFF

GAIA BRIGNONE, DOUGLAS PARAYRE & CAROLINE STAFFORD

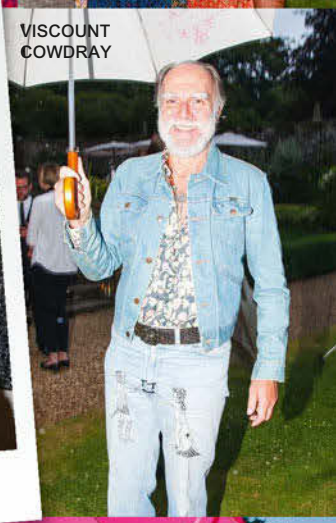
ALBA FAGGIONATO, OLIMPIA PIGNATTI & WILLIAM HOARE

LELLA SOPER

RORY HORNE, FREDDIE HORNE & ZAC HAGEDOORN

THEO BACHE, MILLI CARR & ISSY KIRBY

Sarah, Duchess of York


VISCOUNT COWDRAY

CROWN PRINCE PAVLOS OF GREECE & TIM HOARE

BARNEY HARRIS & MAXIM BALDRY

COUNTESS OF MARCH AND KINRARA

LULU & EDWARD HUTLEY

COSMO RADFORD & FRANCESCA HOARE

PERRY PEARSON & HUGO LAKIN

LORD CHARLES BERESFORD

Lies to tell lefties

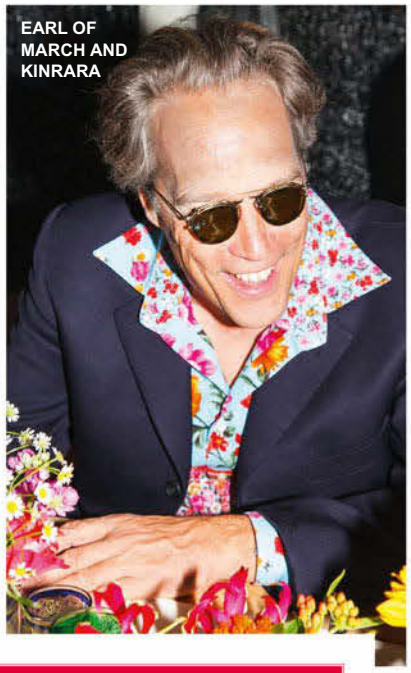
Nobody drinks wine

It might look that way, but it's actually always apple juice or Ribena, sometimes with a shot of vodka in it. The wine is only there so that the wrong sort of people ask for it, and then all the right sorts of people will know not to kiss them from the smell of their breath.

By Hugo Rifkind, who writes for The Times

WILLIAM HOARE

HENRY HOARE



EARL OF MARCH AND KINRARA

ISLAY STOPFORD SACKVILLE & SHONA STOPFORD SACKVILLE

WHAT A TRIP

Up, up and away...

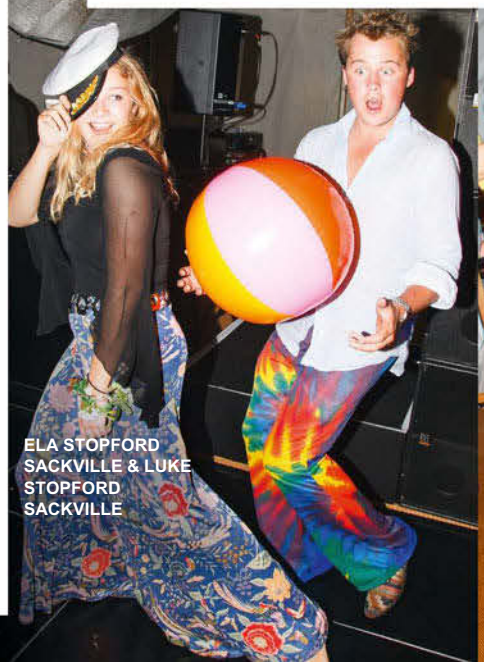
As they peacefully sipped champagne on **Tim and Virginia Hoare**'s lawn in Hampshire, **Felix Flint Wood**, **Princess Olympia of Greece** and **Islay Stopford Sackville** might have imagined that his daughter **Francesca**'s 18th-birthday party would be a civilised affair. WRONG! After dinner, a curtain was drawn back to reveal a psychedelic rave – the 'flower power' theme was now explained. And, despite theoretically 'ending' at 4am, the afterparty raged on until 10am, by which time Tim's annual quota of champagne had been drunk. Every last drop. So it's not really surprising that when Francesca woke up at 5pm the following day, she was absolutely convinced that it was only just time for breakfast.

Photographed by RADU BREBENE

COUNT LEOPOLD & COUNTESS DEBONAIRE VON BISMARCK

Rory Horne

VANESSA TAYLOR & THE MARCHIONESS OF MILFORD HAVEN



ELA STOPFORD SACKVILLE & LUKE STOPFORD SACKVILLE

ANNIE FIDDIAN GREEN & FRANCESCA HOARE

KARL BAUER

MORNING-STAR CHAMPION

JULY SANCHEZ, BROOKE NELSON, KELLIE HABGOOD & POLLY WOODGATE

CLUB TROPICANA

Banana dramas in Camden

Hawaiian shirts, golden sands, clear turquoise water and palm trees – welcome to Camden, the setting for **Lotte Brouwer** and **Suraya Jina**'s Tropical Paradise Party, which quickly descended into a decadent pool party, with **Chi-San Howard** cavorting on an inflatable monkey, **Clarissa Baugh Hagan** being pushed in and **Esk Fraser** and **Georgie Ambrose** indulging in some aquatic canoodling. Luckily for the slippery snoggers, though, underwater snapper **Holly Owen-Frawley** was too distracted by a floating banana (**Charles Eddlestone**) to document their passionate display.

Photographed by CRAIG STEVENSON

Charles Eddlestone & Lotte Brouwer

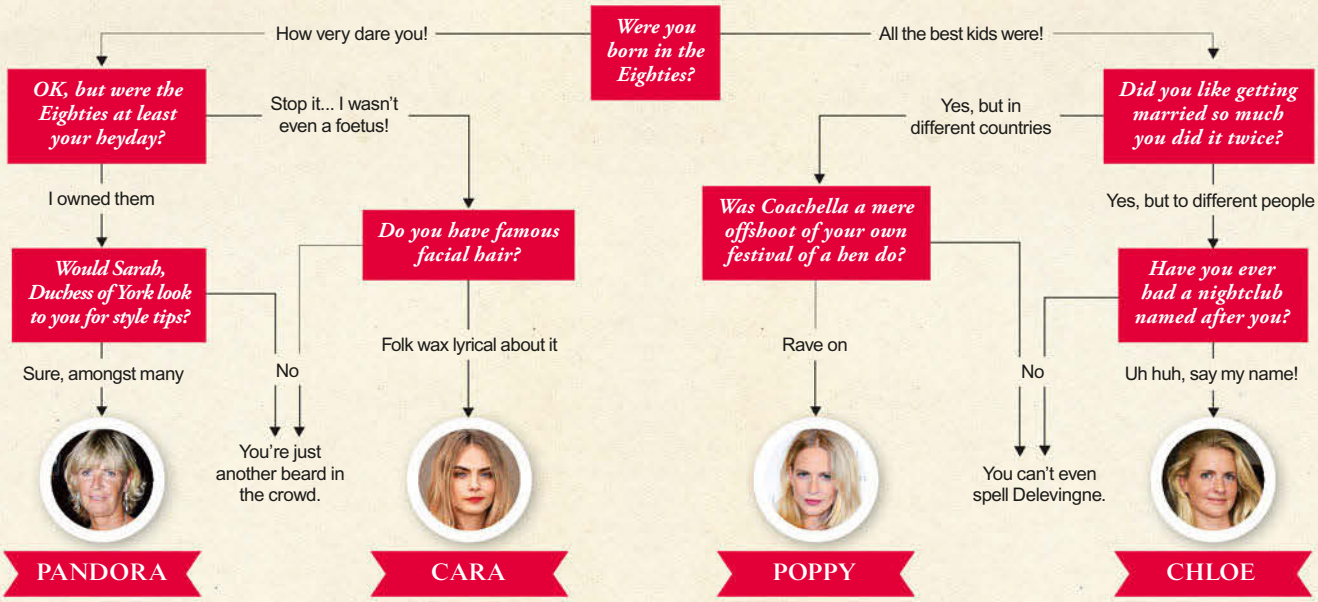
SURAYA JINA

BANANA'S BIG NIGHT OUT!

CHARLES EDDLESTONE

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT, CONRAD ASH, AUGUSTUS THOMAS ELDRIDGE, JAMES HANNA, CHARLES EDDLESTONE, TRENT BELASCO, OLIVER WHEBLE & KIRAN SAGOO

WHICH DELEVINGNE ARE YOU?



PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK, REX FEATURES

LADY ELIZABETH ANSON

SOPHIA HESKETH

NICK MASON, CHARLES GLASS & JAMES LINDSAY

AMBER LE BON & YASMIN LE BON

ALI SPENCER-CHURCHILL

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

Remembering Mark Shand

The **Duchess of Cornwall** and **Annabel Elliot** led 750 friends and relatives who gathered at St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, to remember the extraordinary life of their brother, the charismatic and adored **Mark Shand**. **Henry Wyndham** described his dear friend as a man of 'huge passion and magnetism... highly unconventional, irreverent, unusual – unique. He had a huge heart and we all loved him.' And the extent of that love was tangible in the church.

Photographed by DAFYDD JONES

CLIO GOLDSMITH & AYESHA SHAND

FR ANDREW SLOANE, PRINCESS & PRINCE MICHAEL OF KENT & LADY GABRIELLA WINDSOR

ANDREW PARKER BOWLES & SIMON ELLIOT

THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL

Lady and Lord Bamford

PRINCESS BEATRICE

LADY ELOISE WAYMOUTH

LADY STOPPARD & BIANCA JAGGER

THE PRINCE OF WALES

ANNABEL ELLIOT & ALICE IRWIN

SIR DAVID TANG

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

LEND US A...

'I don't suppose I could borrow…' The words slip out of Sophia's mouth. And before you've had time to think, she's flouncing out of the door – your Louboutins dangling from her hand. She returns them, brimming with tales of her hilarious night. The shoes are only a little scuffed, a fraction out of shape, they're... You'll say nothing. You never do. Because you're English and polite.

THE BORROWING SCALE

Acceptable

Wellies

A pen *(but do give it back)*

Lighter *(ditto)*

Fork *(so long as I've finished with it)*

£1 for pay and display *(but not every time)*

Lipbalm *(but beware of cold sores)*

Soltan

Country house

Husband

Horse *(for hacking)*

Headphones *(although not the in-ear kind)*

Mobile phone *(quickly – battery-dependent. Not abroad)*

Amazon account

Cook

Knickers

Breast milk

Toothbrush

Horse *(for hunting)*

Sisley suncream

A newspaper *(if I haven't read it yet)*

Nanny

Nespresso capsules

Identity

Condom

A cigarette *(just ask nicely and you can have one)*

Unacceptable

JADE PARFITT

ALISTAIR GUY & LAURA WHITMORE

JACK GUINNESS & LILAH PARSONS

FROM LEFT, GEORGE GEMMELL, FLORA RICHARDSON, CHARLIE HANBURY, JACK RICHARDSON, DOMINIC COOPER, LORD LE POER, JAMES REDMAYNE & DEMIAN GREGORY

HANNAH BAGSHAWE & EDDIE REDMAYNE

PRINCE HARRY

Edie Campbell and Otis Ferry

CHARLOTTE RILEY & TOM HARDY

MIA & ROKSANDA ILINCIC

ALEXA CHUNG & FIFI BROWN

AZEALIA BANKS & TINIE TEMPAH

THE COUNTESS OF CAWDOR & LADY JEAN CAMPBELL

THE MARCHIONESS OF MILFORD HAVEN & LOUISA WENTWORTH-STANLEY

ELIZA SANGSTER & BEN SANGSTER

CAROLINA BERESFORD & LADY CHARLES BERESFORD

Jilly Cooper and Emily Tarrant

STICKS & KICKS

Polo 2014: a round-up

It was fancy fillies galore at this year's Cartier Queen's Cup, with **Jilly Cooper**, the **Marchioness of Milford Haven** and the **Countess of Cawdor** trotting around the turf with their daughters in tow. Those wanting a little more fun than family time severed the leading rein and bolted to the Kent and Curwen polo to sip cocktails at Mr Fogg's pop-up bar, while at the Veuve Clicquot Gold Cup **Alexa Chung** and **Lily Lewis** roared around the dancefloor to **Tinie Tempah** on the decks.

Photographed by HUGO BURNAND, RICHARD YOUNG, CHARLES SAINSBURY-PLAICE, IAN TONKS & DAVE BENETT

NATASHA MOUFARRIGE & TANIA BRYER

VASSI & ALLEGRA HARRIS

GARTH BEARMAN & CHRISTIAN BEARMAN

PRINCE HARRY

KENT & CURWEN ROYAL CHARITY

PRINCE HARRY, HARALD LINK, JAMES BEIM & THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE

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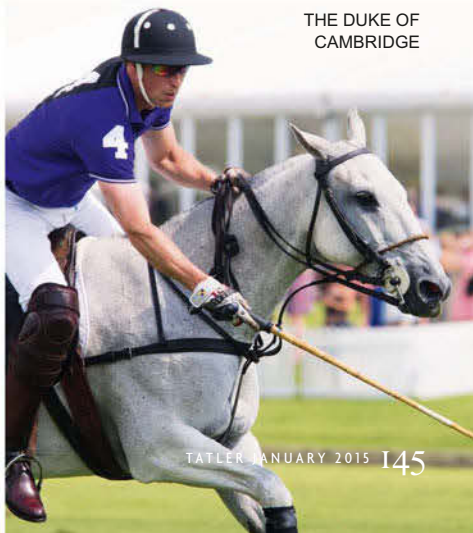

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5. Sexy Kaftans. New colours and styles of designer kaftans from St. Barths now in stock. Tops, tunics and kaftans available to buy securely online at www.louisesandberg.com or email info@louisesandberg.com for more information.

6. AKAPELLO produces luxury silk and leather accessories, Made In England. Each item is noted for its quality, attention to detail, and timeless appeal – Participate in the creation of a new British Heritage. "Eden Scarf", £75, by AKAPELLO, www.akapello.com call +44 (0) 77131 23522 or email info@akapello.com for more information.

7. "Exclusively for ladies with petite feet". **The Little Shoe Shop**. The specialists in small size ladies footwear. Beautiful Italian and Spanish designer footwear in the smallest sizes (U.K. 13.1/2 – 3.1/2, European 32- 35). Available online at www.thelittleshoeshop.com or at the London store at 71 York Street, London W1H 1BJ. Call 020 7723 5321 for more information.

"You shall go to the ball."

8. HANDBAG2HANDBAG is the award winning 11 pocket organiser designed for busy women. Each pocket is measured to take all your essentials so you can find everything in any bag, plus change bags in an instant. With a pocket for even your passport and boarding card, this is your perfect travelling companion. Also makes the perfect gift! Visit www.handbag2handbag.com or call 01344 291120.

9. Comfy Clogs are handmade in Sweden and available in a range of the latest fun and funky styles and colours. Sizes for women and children. Perfect and practical for pregnant women and useful in the house and garden! Real skin Clogs available in a variety of styles. Call Cecilia on 07815 750340 or 020 8780 9767 for a brochure. Visit them at www.comfyclogs.net

10. Lady Sharma. Dress for your events with a stylish hat or head piece from milliner Lady Sharma. Lesley Sharma draws her inspiration from British, Chinese and Indian origins, creating ready-to-wear and bespoke pieces to match every occasion. Whether for a wedding, christening, race day or even just an elegant evening be sure to visit www.ladysharma.co.uk or call 07976 713358 for more information.

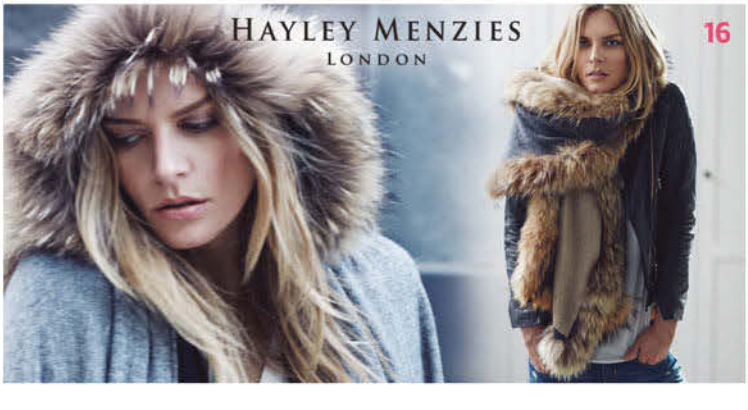
11. Neoma bespoke leather bags - Elegantly tailored using sumptuous tactile leathers. Designed with a passion for timeless sophistication. For more information, visit www.neomadesign.com email info@neomadesign.com or call 07813 914 005. Quote 'TATLER' for an exclusive 10% discount off your order.

12. Stephanie Frances Design: Working from her roof-top studio in Poole, Dorset, Stephanie designs and makes each dress on an individual basis. Her vintage style cocktail dresses, exquisite bridal gowns and pretty children's wear are worn by customers in the UK and all over the world. Find Stephanie's unique designs at www.etsy.com "SFrancesDesign" her website www.stephaniefrances.com Facebook: stephaniefrancesdesigns and Twitter: @SFrancesDesign

13. These luxurious 100% Cashmere Ponchos from **Juice Collection** are the perfect accessory for every season! Whether for travelling, a day on the beach or a dinner party, these stunning ponchos can be worn for any occasion and will fit perfectly in your bag. Visit www.juicecollection.co.uk to see the full collection of colours or call 01531 632990 for more information.

14. Blue Velvet is the home of contemporary and classic footwear direct from the heart of Europe. Always one step ahead, they have established themselves on their quality and first-rate service. Visit them at 174 Kings Road, SW3 4UP or call 020 7376 7442. Buy online at www.bluevelvetshoes.com

15. Samia Kamar Luxury Handbags: The collection consists of evening Clutch Bags in hand-dyed exotic skins and laser cut leathers, made combining the finest materials and techniques from reputed artisans of Florence, Italy. Each piece is expertly hand crafted and has a distinctive, fashionable look. By appointment only. Visit www.samiakamar.com or email sales@samiakamar.com



16. Hayley Menzies signature fur trim shawls are a sure fire way to stay toasty this season. With a wide selection of designs and colours they have you stylishly wrapped for all occasions this season! For an exclusive introductory 10% off, use code: TATLER at checkout. Visit their Notting Hill boutique or shop online hayleymenzies.com or call +44 (0)20 8969 5300.

17. Mara Gibbucci encompasses the beauty of modern fashion within her totally unique, wearable art-designs. Mara specialises in everyday designer women's clothing collections, which incorporate a range of haberdashery including; buttons, buckles and threads. Her designs are hand-made, using natural, eco-friendly materials, and are always designed with the customer in mind. Mara Gibbucci is proud of making real clothes for real people. Visit www.maragibbucci.com

18. The **Misaro** Theodora is a sophisticated and gracious design which possesses confidence in simplicity. This frame features an elegant shape made with royal blue acetate on the exterior and deep green on the inner side of the frame. Price: 55.26 EUR. To purchase this and many more styles, visit www.misaro.com.au or call +61 401 486 638.

19. Accha is a new lifestyle brand by Maritzina Slater. These striking pashmina coats, exquisitely made of pure pashmina wool with a variety of brightly coloured silk linings, can be dressed up or down to suit formal occasions and more casual wear. Being warm yet lightweight makes this beautiful wardrobe staple an ideal travel companion. Find out more at www.acchadesigns.com

20. Hugs & Co. footwear bring you their best driving shoes yet. With our superior construction and lined in luxurious soft leather these driving shoes offer unbeatable comfort. With a huge range of imaginative and classic colours we have a driving shoe for almost every occasion and outfit. Other styles available include tasselled, penny and sneaker loafers. Don't forget there's free shipping for all UK orders. Email info@hugsandco.com or call 020 8123 2444 for more information and visit www.hugsandco.com to shop the range.

21. Rewind Vintage Affairs are dedicated to make shopping for vintage and pre-loved items easy and safe. Consign or buy your Chanel, Hermes, YSL and more. They pay more; up to 70% of the sales price. They sell most items fast and offer a free DHL pickup in the UK. Rewind Vintage Affairs can guarantee the authenticity of every product with a money back guarantee. Shop online at www.rewindvintage.com or call 07590 025456 or 020 7565 0886.

22. Twanky Bags create customised leather handbags, designed and made here in the UK. Choose from their Large Indulgence, Sophisticated Satchel and Out To Lunch Clutch. The new "Created Just For You" range is based on what's on trend and the most desired colours. Prices between £370–£530. Visit www.twankybags.com or email orders@twankybags.com for more information.

23. Strawberry Shirts: Luxury silk shirt also in Black. £75 plus postage. For full range, visit www.Strawberryshirts.com or call 07966 965170 for more information.

24. A must have item! **Lou Grey Cashmere**, the ultimate investment in comfort and style. 100% pure cashmere poncho, available in beautiful vibrant colours, £160. Visit www.lougreycashmere.co.uk or call 01453 844644 for more information.

25. Harriet Sanders – is a designer and manufacturer of luxury leather handbags, each piece is handmade to give a bespoke feel. Harriet offers the facility to 'design your own' handbag, by selecting the leather colour and suede lining colour you desire. Her signature touch is a lining of contrasting brightly coloured suede. The Bella Bag featured, is her latest design with a 'HS' embossed vintage style clasp and cross body strap. Her designs are trans-seasonal and her range includes purses, clutches, tote bags and rucksacks. View the entire collection at www.harrietsanders.co.uk Enter 'TATLER' at the checkout and receive 20% discount.

26. MP Designs | Hartford, Connecticut. Mariely grew up in a home where her mom sewed and her uncle was a local designer, so it's no wonder she fell in love with fashion design at a young age. Her collections focus on basic pieces for sophisticated young women, with a luxurious feel. For Mariely, the foundation of her designs lay in the basics, which are always chic, with the right fabric, and forever classic. Visit www.marielyprattsdesigns.com or email prattsmariely@yahoo.com for more information.

27. Karen Kalashnik. Fringe accessories are hot this season! This chic crossbody bag in soft caramel coloured leather will add texture to any outfit and will make a bold statement without saying a word! Handbags by Karen Kalashnik: Visit karenkalashnik.etsy.com Email karen.kalashnik@gmail.com

28. A long established cottage industry based in East Anglia with dedicated crafts people who have set out to provide the finest quality and widest range of **Carpet Bags** available today. Strong, lightweight, hardwearing bags, made from real, traditionally patterned carpet, make wonderful gifts as well as good companions! Buy online at www.carpetbags.co.uk

29. Knee-length batwing coat from London designer **Eskay W**'s "Darker Hues" collection. The brand is focused on craftsmanship and design to create beautifully finished timeless pieces that are a joy to wear. "Darker Hues" is available now at Wolf & Badger Notting Hill 020 7229 5698 and at www.wolfandbadger.com For more information about the brand email info@eskayw.com

30. Comfy Clogs. Swedish samibracelets have finally arrived in London! The incredibly popular bracelets you can see on many stars today, are made of reindeer leather with silver and pewter thread with an antler button. Sizes for children, women and men. Visit www.comfyclogs.net or call Cecilia on 07815 750340 or 020 8780 9767 to find out more.

31. XD Xenia Design Croatian based brand, known for architectural design and exceptional style, "Timeless XD Dimension". In their next collection, XD is showing a combination of soft fluid fabrics in contrast with firm textures, creating unique 3D Design on fabric. Visit www.xenia-design.hr or email info@xenia-design.hr for more information.

32. Chatham Marine. "Verona" £110. A ladylike Chelsea boot with a real kick of style. Features a soft leather upper, leather sole and padded leather insock. Available in Black (pictured) and Brown, sizes 3–8. Buy direct from Chatham's website or through their vast network of retailers across the UK – Call 0845 2700 217 for more information or visit www.chatham.co.uk

33. Olena Dats: perfect choice for New Year's Eve or for a fascinating cruise during the holidays. A combination of Ukrainian traditional embroidery with a reflection of modern life. You may find more here www.olena-dats.com or contact them at olenadats@gmail.com

34. 2 Queens Vintage are purveyors for everything vintage and retro. At this one-stop luxury shop they offer unique dresses, hats, furs, shawls, jewellery, accessories and more. You will be sure to find a beautiful piece to fall in love with! Everything they offer is authentic vintage plus a selection of brand/designer vintage too. For exciting fashion and lifestyle updates, visit their Facebook and Instagram page @2QueensVintage or their blog www.2queensvintageblog.com Shop online at www.2queensvintage.com to see what they have in store for you.

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2. The Watch Agency specialise in buying and selling new, ex display and pre owned watches by the world's leading watchmakers, including Rolex, Cartier, Patek Philippe, and Jaeger Le Coultre. All jewellery also available at large discounts. Pictured Lady's 18ct Gold Rolex Datejust on President Bracelet with Diamond set Bezel Dial, Lugs and Bracelet. New £38,200. As New £9,995. With prices starting from under half of retail ensure that you speak to one of their watch and jewellery experts to get the best for less. Call 01702 395100 or visit www.watchagency.co.uk

3. Bone of London. Inspired by the natural elegance of the leopard, Bone of London have crafted a timeless piece to reflect the beauty of this infamous creature of the wild. The "Leopard Ring" comprises of a stunning 1.52 ct yellow marquise diamond encased in a yellow gold setting surrounded by yellow sapphires and cognac diamonds. Check out the new boutique on 496 Kings Road, SW10 0LE, call 020 8616 0480 or visit www.boneoflondon.com

4. Estancia Designs free form Australian Boulder Opal sterling silver ring size 6.5, $200 USD. Their jewellery features natural and semi precious gemstones and pearls, sterling silver and 14kt gold filled metals. Visit www.estanciadesigns.com or contact lisa@estanciadesigns.com Enjoy a 10% discount by using code "TATLER" at checkout.

5. Latham & Neve – known for their stunning contemporary hand-made British jewellery since 1997. Featured is the unique Ripple Bangle in beaten silver and 18ct gold, £205 Ballroom bangles, everyday earrings, ravishing rings and much much more... Buy online/stockists/brochure, visit www.lathamandneve.co.uk or call 01580 753399.

6. Coco's Liberty. We love this amazing new brand Coco's Liberty and their different and unique take on designing refreshingly edgy and delicate jewellery pieces for strong and fierce women. The jewellery is about clean cut creations and a pure approach to precious metals, using only the metal as the medium, without the "distraction" of stones. The jewellery is amazingly delicate yet at the same time strong, fierce, chic and sleek. For more information, visit www.cocosrevenge.com or email info@cocosliberty.com

7. Du Maurier Watches presents the fabulous Daphne Signature ladies watch. Designed in memory of the late Daphne du Maurier by her grandson, the beautiful antique gold face sits in a classic gold case offset by a stunning red lizard strap. Simple, elegant, classically beautiful... just like the lady herself! Daphne Signature ladies watch £440. Explore the full collection at www.dumaurierwatches.com or call 0845 5193074.

8. Natalie Salisbury Jewellery: As a contemporary Jewellery Designer-maker Natalie creates dramatic yet wearable pieces to adorn and decorate the body. Combining materials like lace into design collections that explore pattern and texture she involves a strong focus on rich floral aesthetics and bold colourings. Visit www.nsj.co.nz or email natalie@nataliesalisburyjewellery.com for more information.

9. Bespoke, beautiful, handmade pieces all made within the UK. **Xanthe Marina** encourages customers to pick and choose from an array of gems, metals and elegant and edgy designs creating individual and unique jewellery that catches the eye and imagination. Pictured here is their 18ct Yellow Gold Earrings with Kingman Turquoise and Amethyst earrings. Quote "Tatler" for 10% off. Call 07768 263198 for more information or visit www.xanthemarina.com

10. Greyhours is a new brand creating ambitious watches by taking advantage of exclusive materials commonly used for the manufacture of high-end timepieces. The 9.10mm thick Essential Black DLC is their first model. Visit www.greyhours.com for further information.

11. Contemporary jewellery at ridiculously low prices (from £15). **Heavenly Necklaces'** collection of fabulous fakes and real gems will take you anywhere. As worn by royalty and celebrities all over the world. Fabulous designs to update your look; just perfect for Christmas presents. Call 020 7371 8268 or visit www.heavenlynecklaces.com

12. www.ambergemstonejewellery.co.uk for beautiful handcrafted genuine sterling silver and Baltic amber jewellery this Christmas. Shop today for earrings, necklaces, bracelets, brooches and pendants. Christmas special offer – free Royal Mail Special Delivery. Give a beautiful gift of pretty silver amber jewellery or simply treat yourself with Amber Now this Christmas at www.ambergemstonejewellery.co.uk

13. Merci Maman offers a beautiful range of personalised gifts. Featured is their personalised Gold Plated Tree of Life Necklace (from £89) that will be engraved by hand with the names, dates or message of your choice. Available either in Sterling Silver or Gold Plated. The dedicated team at Merci Maman will hand-craft your bracelet from start to finish within only a couple of days and they will gift wrap your treasure in their lovely box, sealed with a bow. For more information, visit www.mercimamanboutique.com or call 020 7731 1377.

14. Skultuna 1607. Established in the year 1607 and purveyors to H.M. The King of Sweden. View the latest collections of cuff links and men's accessories and shop now at www.skultuna.com or call +46 21 783 00.

15. Designer jeweller **Liz Tyler** delights in creating individual pieces always with a sense of movement in the flow of the design. Liz does regular exhibitions across the country and will be exhibiting at Chelsea Town Hall with Desire 6-8th March 2015. Visit www.liztyler.com or contact Liz on 01258 820222.

16. Style Never Goes Out Of Fashion. Cobra & Bellamy is the leading name in classically designed watches, retro in style reminiscent of the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Pictured here is the Cobra watch available in Stainless Steel at £99, Rose Gold plated and 21 Carat Gold Plated at £115. Sienna Miller has chosen to eschew more established watch companies to fly the flag for Cobra & Bellamy's retro inspired watch collection, here is a quote from her "Cobra & Bellamy watches are classic, beautiful and affordable I love all of them". To see the whole Cobra & Bellamy watch collection, go to www.cobrabellamywatches.co.uk or call 01736 732112 for further information.

17. Nicci Bethell. Based in West Sussex, Nicci Bethell creates beautiful jewellery inspired from nature, patterns and stylish people from all over the world.This Fleur friendship bracelet is a stunning example that will leave an impression of its own, with the possibility to personalise the petals with initials or any image or silhouette. Visit www.niccibethell.com or email niccibethell@me.com for more information.

18. Ruffs. Cufflinks of distinction for classic shirt cuffs. Visit www.rufflinks.co.uk or call 01489 578867.

TATLER'S FESTIVE EMPORIUM...

1. **My Chef** is the ideal Christmas present for anyone who loves freshly cooked, beautifully presented food, all planned, prepared, served and cleared away when booked through the My Chef service. My Chef is the easy, stress free way to dine at home. Perfect for all your entertaining: dinner parties, special occasions, gatherings with family and friends, or festive feasting! Call 020 7976 6000 or visit www.mychefonline.co.uk

2. **Emma Cornes** designs simple, stunning bags using Britain's best materials, mostly tweeds. As well as her best-selling Kirsty Bag, shown here in Lewis tweed (£159) she makes a range of British-made bags in other cloths. Buy online at www.emmacornes.co.uk or call 01244 879718.

3. Since 1854, **Taylors of Old Bond Street** have produced and sold the finest in Luxury Men's Grooming Products and accessories, creating a brand which is synonymous with British style and quality. Visit their store at 74 Jermyn Street, St James's, London, SW1Y 6NP, call 020 7930 5544 or visit them at www.tayloroldbondst.co.uk

4. **Hammamas** are a "Clever Cotton Towel" that is possibly the most useful, stylish and versatile gift you'll find this Christmas! They are super absorbent, easy to pack, quick drying and come in their own wet bag, so make perfect swimming towels, gym towels, sarongs, bath wraps, holiday and travel essentials. Hammamas are for everyone and can be used for almost anything. Visit www.hammamas.com or call 01580 714714 for more information.

GRENADIER

5. **Punkt.** DP 01 Cordless Phone designed by Jasper Morrison: the ideal gift for the design conscious talkers in your life. Price £199, available in White, Black and Red. Visit www.punktgroup.com or email info@punktgroup.com

6. **Firelighting Without Fuss.** The award winning Grenadier Electric Firelighter is guaranteed to light all types of solid fuels fast. No home with a traditional fire should be without this modern firelighter. Order yours today at www.grenadier.co.uk or call 01829 741649.

7. **Buffalo Brownies.** This range of gourmet chocolate brownies – handmade in Derbyshire – comes in unique, letterbox-friendly packaging, making Buffalo Brownies the perfect treat and an even better gift. Their special mixed box, despatched during Christmas week, is available online at tinyurl.com/bbxmas14

8. Featured are **La De Da**'s Christmas vintage spoon baubles. Tied in grey ribbon all ready to hang, they can be personalised with a name, date or short message. For more information, visit www.ladedaliving.co.uk or call 01242 250 653.

9. Featured is the Christmas Blend coffee from **Taylors of Harrogate**. The smooth, chocolatey tones of Latin American beans balanced with the crisp citrus snap of beans from East Africa, make this the perfect blend to enjoy throughout the festive season. For more information, visit www.taylorscoffee.co.uk or email hello@taylorscoffee.co.uk

10. **Simply Naturale** offer natural skin and hair products made by Idea Toscana (Firenze) Italy. The unique formulas combine Organic Tuscan Extra Virgin Olive Oil with essential oils to make perfect beauty care gifts for you, your family, and friends. Visit www.simplynaturale.co.uk to view the full collection. Call 020 8941 5223 or email info@simplynaturale.co.uk for more information.

11. Using organic, natural materials and fine metal leaf, **Moth and Mirror** are the creators of these elegant, eye-catching pieces. Perfect as a gift or for your own home, they also offer a bespoke service. For more information, visit www.mothandmirror.com or call 07960 587192.

12. **By Sikora** offer a range of simply stunning sheepskin accessories, made using 100% twin faced British sheepskin. Their luxurious range of headbands, mittens, fingerless gloves and scarves are perfect for a trip to the mountains or that winter soiree. For more information, visit www.bysikora.co.uk email info@bysikora.co.uk or call 07932 058703.

13. **NB Gin.** Handcrafted in North Berwick, Scotland, this award-winning artisan gin is unique in its own perfection. Distilled with a fanatical attention to detail, it's delicious, distinct and smooth. Available in Selfridges and other premium UK outlets. Call 0845 467 4547 or visit www.nbgin.com

14. **Beluga Noble** is refined in every way. Using innovation and centuries old traditions, the flavour of Beluga Noble has acquired an incredible smoothness. Their malt spirit is passed through a strict system of purification and filtration and is then rested for a 30 days. Infused with natural honey, oats, vanilla and sylibum the flavour is multi faceted and exquisitely contained. Perfect sipped neat or in an exquisite vodka martini. Available in Selfridges, Harvey Nichols, Fortnum & Mason, and Waitrose.

15. **The King's Ginger** is the emphatically ginger liqueur that was specifically formulated by Berry Bros. in 1903 for King Edward VII. Rich and zesty, it was created to stimulate and revivify His Majesty whilst exposed to the elements on morning rides in his new horseless carriage and has been appreciated by bon viveurs, sporting gentlemen and high-spirited ladies ever since. To drive away the winter chill try their Winter Cup; Simmer 30ml of The King's Ginger with 20ml of cloudy apple juice and 100ml of apple cider for around 30 minutes. Serve in a brandy balloon with a cinnamon stick to finish. Visit www.thekingsginger.com for more recipe ideas. Available at Selfridges, Harvey Nichols and Waitrose or call 0800 280 2440.

16. **Sri Tea**'s Yogi Tea is a mix of ground spices and is a fabulous alternative to the high calorie festive coffees that are in season. With notes of black tea, cinnamon, cloves and ginger it tastes like Christmas in a cup! Sapphire Oolong tea has also become popular lately for its high antioxidant levels which are renowned for their health benefits. For more information and to view the full range, visit www.sritea.co.uk or email info@sritea.co.uk

To advertise contact 020 7499 9080 ext 3705

TATLER'S PARENTS' GUIDE...

Looking after your Little ones!

HUNTER & HARPER

1. Popupshop was founded in 2007 and their passion is to make everlasting basic wear both sustainably and high on quality. Their aim is to create timeless organics. Therefore the products are basic, classic, and always in-style clothes, easy to wear, mix, and match. Visit www.popupshop.net or email info@popupshop.net for more information.

2. Dazzle and Fizz Parties is a theatrical children's party planner delivering magical events for children aged 0-16 years. Clients include members of the Royal Family and the prestigious Harrods Lifestyle. For more information, visit www.dazzleandfizzparties.co.uk or call 01932 961 422.

3. Woolshed presents to its young customers a combination of traditional hand knitted garments in Classic Woolshed Collection and the new exclusive edition coats and jackets of LuskA@ Woolshed. Find out more on www.woolshed.co.uk or call them on +44 77 20535524.

4. Create the perfect gift with one of their "essential baby boxes" or design your own with **Hunter & Harper**'s beautiful organic clothing range, pampering creams, soft cotton wraps, handcrafted toys, comforters and much more. Visit them at www.hunterandharper.com.au

5. Cheeky Monkey Tree Houses specialise in the design and build of bespoke tree houses to compliment your garden perfectly. They can also undertake European and Worldwide commissions. Visit www.cheekymonkeytreehouses.co.uk email info@cheekymonkeytreehouses.co.uk or call +44 (0) 1403 732 452 for more information.

6. Eve's Toyshop. Toys to treasure... forever! Are you looking for that extra special gift, then visit a real toy shop at www.evestoyshop.com to find that perfect present. Their toys, sourced from throughout Europe, are lovingly made and built to last. Call in and see them at 1 King Street, Llandeilo SA19 6AA. Call 01558 824755.

7. The Traditional Children Company. Beautifully crafted and coordinated classic clothes, shoes and accessories reminiscent of times gone by for babies and children. See their wonderful new range of smocked dresses, romper suits, swimming sets and hair bows in all sorts of colours, shapes and sizes now online. To find out more, visit www.thetraditionalchildrencompany.co.uk or call 07795 347276.

8. Ryan & Rose Cutie Clips are stylish clips that attach to your little one's dummies, toys, sippy cups, etc. Not only are Cutie Clips universal and multi-functional, they are fashionable, and help keep a baby's or toddlers' belongings safe and sanitary. Don't want to lose it, Cutie Clip it! Visit www.RyanAndRose.co or email RyanAndRoseInc@gmail.com for more information.

9. Isbjörn of Sweden offers premium outdoor and skiwear for babies, kids and juniors up to 14 years old. The collection, made from the best eco-friendly materials, encompasses all the necessary layers to keep children warm, dry and happy whatever the weather. Available at Snow and Rock and www.alexandalexa.com For more information, visit www.isbjornofsweden.com call +44 77 33 301 345 for agent LittleOutdoorCompany or email info@isbjornofsweden.com

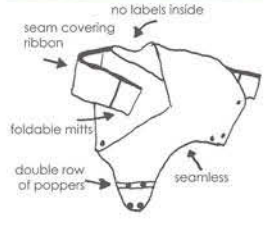
10. Long Wave Apparel's unique swimwear is designed for the sun! Bright and bold prints across a collection of coordinating swim shirts, bikinis and shorts for girls and boys. Made in the UK using the best Italian UV50+ fabrics. info@longwavapparel.co.uk or www.longwaveapparel.co.uk

11. The Little Furniture Company, based in Kent, designs and produces beautiful, bespoke, wooden children's chairs, tables, toy boxes, treasure boxes and more. Each piece is lovingly hand painted and personalised. Original christening/birthday gifts to be treasured throughout childhood and beyond. For more information, visit www.thelittlefurnituretcompany.com or call 01892 730957.

12. Ocatupi The gorgeous custom made unisex clothing at **Ocatupi** is the perfect addition to any children's wardrobe. From headbands and dresses, to trousers and moccasins, each fabric is striking. Check out their fantastic range at www.ocatupi.com

13. Introducing **Air Puppy**, the huggable range of plush soft toys for children available from Boots.com. Extremely cuddly and perfect for all ages as their first toy, Air Puppy come in a variety of sizes and characters. Your little ones will love snuggling up to them. From RRP £12. Visit www.airpuppy.com

14. Niddle Noddle is a beautiful online children's boutique offering a brilliant selection of unusual stocking fillers for this Christmas! With exclusive fashion, accessories, books, toys and homeware for children (and their parents!), their aim is to bring to you new labels, many of which will be exclusive to Niddle Noddle. Go and visit their store in Crouch End (5 Topsfield Parade, Crouch End, London N8 8RP) or check out their website www.niddlenoddle.com



15. Beibamboo offers timeless and season-less organic bamboo/cotton baby wear. Their designs have adjustable sizes giving them long usage, have minimal seams and all labels are on the outside of the garment. For more information on these award winning designs, visit www.beibamboo.com or enquire at info@beibamboo.com

16. Browse through their range of over 50 brilliant brands of children's toys. At **Kelly's Toy Room** they have all your favourite characters, games and toys, alongside a selection of wonderfully unique boutique toys for something a little different. Plus, their wide selection contains plenty of toys for all ages, from newborn to early teenagers. Shop online at www.kellystoyroom.co.uk or call them on 01252 302328.

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL...

Pamper your pets!

1. Judy Rothchild Lifestyle offers a unique and stylish range of high quality dog accessories made from the finest leather. Judy Rothchild has built a reputation as the UK's leading designer of western styled boots over the last 30 years. Visit www.judyrothchild.com or call 020 7823 3459 for more information.

2. Italian company founded in the 1969. **TheLux** produces the highest Italian quality accessories for your dog. TheLux offers an incredible choice of amazing products (also customized!) handmade using Tuscan leather and the finest accessories for your best friend. Email ordini@theluxleather.it or visit www.theluxleather.com now, you'll never come back.

3. Chi Ki Paws are new, unique brand who design four poster and contemporary pet beds. The hand crafted Buckle Berry four poster bed combines style with practical pet friendly fabrics for comfort and yet beautifully compliments your home. Bespoke designs are also available, so visit www.chikipaws.com or call 01282-851949 to buy this Christmas!

4. Pawberry: designer dog wear handmade in the UK. Pictured here is a Winter Warmer Dog Coat unique with its built in harness. With waterproof outer fabric and spacer fabric lining, it is hard-wearing and wicks moisture off the body. They mould around the dog's body and have a Velcro strap to hold the coat in place. For more information and styles, visit www.pawberry.co.uk or call 020 3305 7525.

5. Lords & Labradors are creators of quintessentially British luxury dog seating and bedding, gorgeous dog crate covers and the finest, hand selected pet accessories. Their products bring a touch of elegance, individuality and something truly authentic to your home. Visit www.lordsandlabradors.co.uk or email hello@lordsandlabradors.co.uk to find out more.

6. Jolly & Bea's Dog & Cat Accessories is an online boutique specialising in stylish and contemporary dog and cat accessories. 10% off 1st order. Use Voucher code "1st order" to redeem (expires 31st December 2014). Visit www.jollyandbeas.com

7. At **Woofs To Kittys** in Battersea, not only can you have your dog or cat groomed, you can also shop in their lovely pet boutique. They have a wonderful range of ethically sourced, healthy and natural foods and treats and wonderful products including quality handmade beds, collars and pet accessories from the UK. Visit www.woofstokittys.com

8. Pet Pooch Boutique hand make bespoke designer collars, leads and bandanas in their Sussex studio. Whether your dog's taste is fresh, funky, floral or traditional. Collar pictured £9.99 in sizes XS-XL. Beds, toys and clothing also available. Wholesale welcome. Visit www.PetPoochBoutique.com or call 07796 362332.

9. Rokabone, British Collarsmith and creator of coveted designer apparel for Deserving Dogs. Need a unique handcrafted Italian leather collar and lead? Or a stylish bed for your furry friend to lounge in style and comfort? They are a luxury dog fashion brand based in London, with all products handmade in England. Quote'TATLER' for 10% off, expires 30/04/15. Visit www.rokabone.co.uk or email hello@rokabone.co.uk for more information.

10. Nekozen offers the new generation of cat Furniture that perfectly combines style and functionality. Pictured here is the Bamboo III which is a natural and decorative scratching post with four different scratching areas to give any breed of cat hours of scratching time. This sculptural piece of interior decoration feels like it has been brought from the jungle especially for your cat! £280, 10% off on this particular item using discount code TATLER10 when placing the order. Visit www.nekozen.net to view the range. Call +34 646 643 999 or email info@nekozen.net for further information.

11. Home-baked personalised Christmas cakes and treats available at **Doggy Love Bakery**. Treat your pups with their individual Chocolate Fudge Brownie Doggy Christmas cake (£5) or their Turkey & Cranberry Christmas trees (£1.75 for a bag of 5) To see more, visit www.doggylovebakery.co.uk

12. Igloo Pets are suppliers of unique pet products and accessories. The Igloo (pictured) is a combined litter tray and carrier which will look great in any home but also useful for taking your pet to the vet or on holiday! available in ten cool colours – Arctic Blue, Polar Pink and Tundra Grey. Visit www.igloopets.com to buy one of these eco-friendly carriers, email enquiries@igloopets.com or call 02392 474 676 for more information.

13. Walk With Me: Super soft yet robust basket bed, made with a lavender herringbone tweed from 100% Yorkshire wool with cream sherpa fleece lining, guarantees ultimate sleeping comfort and style. Fully machine washable. Available in six sizes: mini to giant. Visit www.walkwithme.co.uk or call 0115 837 5320 for more information.

14. What is the fashion conscious dog wearing this season? In London, Monte Carlo, New York, Beverley Hills and Milan the choice has to be the **Tail We Can Wag** collar and matching lead. These stunning hand-made collars and leads are woven in Guatemala and lovingly sewn in the USA with brass fittings that won't rust. To view the collection, visit www.xtradog.com or call 0330 088 3647.

15. Poppy & Rufus, a new British brand offering a range of beautiful, co-ordinated and useful products for dogs and owners. All lovingly made in the UK. View their "At Home" and "Out & About" collections at www.poppyandrufus.co.uk or call 0161 714 0420.

16. Silver Peacock hand makes luxury collars and leads in a range of styles specifically for Sighthounds. Using only the finest materials including Harris and Yorkshire tweeds, pure silk and Liberty prints, they have gained a reputation for being the "go to" brand for the discerning Whippet, Greyhound, Lurcher or Saluki owner. Bespoke service available. For more see: www.silverpeacock.co.uk or email info@silverpeacock.com for more information.

17. iFetch – The Automatic Ball Launcher for Small Dogs. Keep your pooch active and entertained all day long, even when you're not at home! The worlds first indoor or outdoor use automatic ball launcher is operated by your dog with no need for human intervention so you can keep your throwing arm rested for another day. The iFetch can be pre-programmed to throw balls 10ft, 20ft and 30ft, it uses 1.5" miniature tennis balls so is suitable for smaller breed dogs. Comes with a set of 3 balls to get you and your dog started. Visit www.goifetch.co.uk

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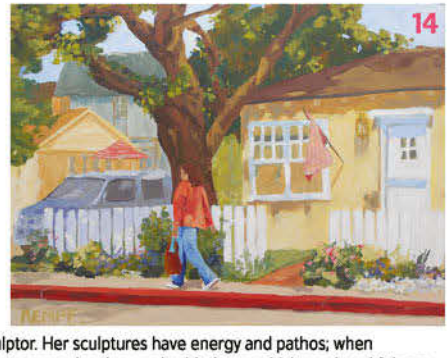

1. The Limehouse Lamp Company have been established for over 40 years and are world renowned for creating fine period lighting. With a range of over 200 interior and exterior pieces, each is hand crafted and finished to order in their company's workshops in Sussex. Clients range from the finest stately homes to theme parks and museums who wish to recreate a true character ambience. Their 180 page brochure is well worth browsing through and is available by calling 01273 497070. You can also view all their designs online at www.limehouselighting.com

2. Millbrook Beds. It's your best kept secret in the bedroom. Traditionally handmade in the UK for almost 70 years, Millbrook Beds are made to order using only the finest, locally-sourced, natural materials to offer the ultimate in sleep luxury. Visit www.millbrook-beds.co.uk email enquiry@millbrookbeds.co.uk or call 0845 373 1111.

3. Emily Gray creates bold, bright distinctive images in layered laser cut Perspex: A sculpture on your wall. One off commissions available. Visit www.urbansoup.co.uk to buy online or call 07737 119081.

4. Miles Baker: Self-taught artist whose sole subject is the circus clown and the only artist in the world for which the clown pathos shines through! Visit www.milesbakerclownartist.co.uk or call 01395 270383 for more information.

5. Tolly McRae has fabulously luxurious blankets, all hand finished in the British Isles. You will LOVE these chunky herringbone lambswool rugs that come bundled up in a chestnut leather strap, ideal for outdoor pursuits and soft enough to use indoors. Seen here in stunning Wild Rose. Available in Old Rose, Autumn Plum, Heather, Navy, Charcoal, Clementine and zingy Lemon Zest. Get cosy this winter. Shop online at www.tollymcrae.co.uk or email danielle@tollymcrae.co.uk for more information.

6. Cima Azimi's striking paintings are sensitive, intriguing and imaginative with a modern edge. As a painter she is interested in the exploration of the subconscious mind and the play between past and present thoughts feelings and emotions deriving inspiration from nature, ancient monuments, cave paintings and space imagery. Her work is complex and evokes a sense of ambiguity and illusion that evolves on a spiritual level. Call 07455 097102 or email cima.azimi@live.co.uk for more information.

7. For chillier nights, choose luxurious **Rooi** cashmere throws. Tatler readers secure an exclusive 20% discount with the code TATLER20, to place an order. Visit rooi.com or call their free UK helpline on 0800 093 8345.

8. Acres Farm have been manufacturing bespoke Club Fenders since 1979. Their collection of traditional, classical and contemporary club fenders are made using up-to-date equipment but the methods of manufacture, selection of the finest materials and emphasis on quality are in the highest tradition of British workmanship. To request a copy of the ACRES FARM brochure to view their enormous range of styles, call +44 (0)118 974 4305 or visit www.acresfarm.co.uk

9. Jane Hamilton portrait and figure sculptor. Her sculptures have energy and pathos; when doing a portrait, whether young or old, she approaches her work with the sensitivity and truthfulness needed for a likeness. To see more of Jane's work, visit www.janehamilton-sculpture.com or call 01295 750636.

10. Make homemade ice cream easily in as little as ten minutes with the **Zoku** Ice Cream Maker! Store the unit in your freezer for 24 hours and you're ready to go, create classic flavours like vanilla and chocolate or experiment and create your own. Only £24.99. Visit www.zokuhome.com or email customerservices@burton-mccall.co.uk for more information.

11. Surface Candy produce quality bespoke knobs that will add a personal touch to any door or drawer. Surface Candy also offer a design service enabling you to create unique door and furniture knobs for your room schemes. Add class, style, quirkiness or fun into any room. Don't be drab be fab! Visit www.surfacecandy.co.uk email kelly@surfacecandy.co.uk or call 01603 673924 for more information.

12. Must-Have Bins present a stunning collection of hard to find essential home accessories – baskets, tissues and jardinières, all hand made with exceptional attention to detail – they are just too good to hide. Call 0845 5280932 for their fabulous 2015 brochure or visit www.musthavebins.co.uk A bespoke service and international shipping is available.

13. Eric Wiles Photography of Northern California creative focus on Still life, and Fine Art reveal dynamic images of man made objects and natural beauty. One of Arttour International Magazines Top 60 Masters of Contemporary Artists 2013/2014, also recently nominated for Italy's Sandro Botticelli Artistic Prize. His work is a must see, international delivery available. Visit www.ew-photo.com www.eric-wiles.artistwebsites.com or call 001 (408)261-8812.

14. California artist **Nancy Kempf**'s colourful paintings of gardens, beaches and landscapes will engage your spirit. Shown here is "Balboa Island Walk" ©2014 ($425 USD). Balboa Island is a vibrant California island of beach homes, night lights and a popular ferry. Visit www.nancykempffineart.com or email NancyKempf1@gmail.com

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'HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER' PAGE 110

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PHOTOGRAPH: WILL SANDERS

THIS IS THE PAGE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR
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ABOUT TOWN

WHERE'S MY HEIR?

he says. 'I have all these ancestors looking down on me, saying, "What are you going to do about it?"' There is also the matter of a 1,000-acre estate in Lincolnshire to be sorted. Will his daughter inherit it? Would his brother? 'It is a sore and sensitive subject,' he says.

Primogeniture in the peerage was an issue discussed when the Duchess of Cambridge became pregnant for the first time in 2012 – and then she had Prince George and it was forgotten about. But a group called the Hares (tagline: 'Equality for women in the peerage') wants the topic to be picked up again. Spearheaded by artist Lady Liza Campbell and journalist Victoria Lambert – formally known as the Countess of Clancarty – the group is named after a comment made by Tory peer Lord Trefgarne last year. Changing the law so that a female royal could inherit the throne would 'set the hare running' on changing the entire peerage, he thundered.

So it should have done, cry the Hares, whose members include the 16th Earl of Westmorland, who has no sons but one daughter, and the only child of the Labour peer Viscount Simon. 'My father's the third viscount, so it's not a very old title,' says Fiona Simon cheerfully. 'But it's something to be proud of, a kind of heirloom. If you had an old teapot, but only a girl to inherit it, you wouldn't just chuck it away, would you?' Fiona, a 43-year-old events manager, lives in London. She has no aspirations to live in a 26-bedroom castle and laze about eating cake all day as a viscountess. She just wants equality. 'The system may be ridiculous,' she says of the British peerage. 'But it should at least be *fair* and ridiculous.'

Of course, it's perhaps for the best that, in some cases, certain lines of the British aristocracy should fail to produce heirs. Take the final Earl of Bridgewater, a famed 19th-century eccentric who would throw dinner parties for dogs – to which the dogs had to come dressed in the latest fashions, including little shoes, and would sit on chairs around the dining table eating off silver plates. The earl himself wore a new pair of shoes every day. The earldom vanished in 1829, when he died – he had never married, having always insisted that he much preferred dogs to women. □

THIS IS THE PAGE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR
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Media tycoon, poetry lover, Russian dandy, art collector, social butterfly, sexual enigma, lavish host, spiritual adventurer...

David Jenkins unravels the mystery that is Evgeny Lebedev

twice been raided by armed and masked agents of the Russian security service, and he faced charges of 'hooliganism, motivated by political hatred' when he socked a fellow guest on a TV show. The possibility – the likelihood – of a long jail sentence beckoned, and jail, said Evgeny, is 'an easy place for someone to be taken out'. Unexpectedly, Alexander was sentenced to only 150 hours of community service. A surprise, but a pleasant one – even though Alexander said efforts had been made to destroy his businesses. Then, early last September, Alexander delivered a lecture inveighing against corruption, including the $1 trillion he said had disappeared from Russia between 2010–2011. Two weeks later, the authorities raided Alexander's bank again; it's accused of tax evasion. No wonder there have been rumours that his second wife, Elena Perminova – a Siberian beauty given a six-year sentence for drug dealing that was suspended (she says she was coerced), she once posed nude for Russian *Playboy* – wanted him to give up the struggle in Russia and relocate to London.

Which is where Evgeny had returned in 1995, at his own request. He went to Mill Hill and first came to the attention of Nicholas Coleridge, president of Condé Nast International, as a 17-year-old 'sort of going out' with Coleridge's goddaughter Sophie Dahl, then a 'quite shy' girl doing her A-levels. Dahl is, she says, still very fond of Evgeny – jolly decent of her as, according to Coleridge, who met the young couple at Dahl's mother Tessa's Oxfordshire house, Tessa spent the evening flirting with Evgeny, and 'this scrawny, snake-hipped Soviet' ended up the evening leaping 'the worse for wear' into the Thames.

For a time, indeed, Evgeny frolicked, as young men do; Robert Hanson remembers a 'particularly good summer' in St Tropez with him; Jonathan Best, the event planner, recalled that 'Evgeny had some wild years'; and Andy Wong remembers Evgeny as a close friend, 'always up for fun, full of energy. Clubs? My God – the usual. Boujis a lot, an awful place called Attica, a bit of Annabel's and Tramp. But there was always a very gentle, reserved, cultivated side to him. And I think he was one of those guys who wanted to be older and do things older people could do – cultural stuff, current affairs.'

The grope for gravitas started in 2006, when an unshaven, shades-wearing Evgeny pitched up with a PR girl at Geordie Greig's office at *Tatler*, where Greig was then editor. They had, the PR girl said, some connection with someone called 'Michael Gooby-choff', and some idea of a party for the Raisa Gorbachev Foundation for children with cancer. Would *Tatler* cover it? No, said Greig, *Tatler* would give it, with the Lebedevs. And so they did, at Althorp. Alexander was there, and Mikhail Gorbachev; white tie and tails were worn; 'millions' were raised; society took the Lebedevs to its bosom. Three years later, the *Standard* was bought. In Russia, says Greig, 'a message is always louder if it comes from the outside'. To buy the *Standard* gave the Lebedevs 'extraordinary influence in London and beyond'. It is, though, a curious operation. Evgeny – not known as a details man, though blessed with a fantastic memory and the ability to summarise an agenda acutely – has London; Alexander presides over Russia. And given Alexander's travails there, one can see why one observer remarks: 'You never know: they might disappear in a puff of smoke.'

It's this that gives Evgeny the Gatsby quality so many remark on. He is, say his intimates, very good company and a considerate, thoughtful friend – news perhaps to those who've suffered from his capriciousness. But others perceive a solitariness about him, and an ennui that propels this gilded exile from one exotic adventure to another; no wonder, they say, that each year he visits the great Russian impresario Diaghilev's tomb in Venice, on the melancholy island of San Michele. It's not what Fry sees: 'A friend for life on whom I can rely and with whom I can laugh and laugh.' Nor what Walliams relishes: 'Evgeny has a delicious and mischievous sense of humour.' A sense of humour that, I'm told, extends to a passion for Alan Partridge. Admirable taste – but let's hope Evgeny doesn't take it too far. The idea of him ending up in a Norfolk Travelodge, running an East Anglian newspaper, is too much to bear. Chekhovian, though. And Evgeny might like that. □

So where would you hang your stocking?

Claire Pilton *asks twelve London and country agents to choose a property for Christmas*

KEYS TO *Poulton Priory, Poulton, Gloucestershire*

- LOCATION: five miles from Cirencester, 12 miles from Swindon (Paddington 57 mins)
- MAIN HOUSE: 14,737sq ft over three floors, including nine bedroom suites, three reception rooms, cinema/playroom and wine cellar
- ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION: Three-bedroom gate lodge, former squash court with potential to provide two-bedroom cottage
- AMENITIES: Swimming pool, tennis court
- GROUNDS: 160 acres
- GUIDE PRICE: £12.5 million

'This Cotswolds mini estate with parkland enjoys the best of both worlds. The house has retained all its beautiful period features while being extensively refurbished and modernised. Consequently you can move in straight away, avoiding the usual maintenance upkeep. The reception hall would accommodate an impressively tall Christmas tree and the eight bedroom suites would accommodate all the family over the festive season,' says Rupert Sweeting of Knight Frank (020 7629 8171).

KEYS TO *116 Eaton Square, Belgravia, SW1*

- CURRENTLY: A double-fronted 5,949sq ft property over three floors
- POTENTIAL: Planning, listed-building status and Grosvenor consent obtained to create an 8,836sq ft four-storey residence with private lift, a 280sq ft loggia, 2,131sq ft of terraces and garden.
- TENURE: New lease expiring 2083
- GUIDE PRICE: £32 million

Richard Dalton of Savills (020 7730 0822) says: 'Eaton Square is widely considered to be the jewel in London's crown. This prestigious address dates back to the 1820s and is famed for the grand buildings surrounding an elongated set of six private gardens. The opportunity to deliver a property of over 9,000sq ft with a swimming pool (there are currently only four properties with pools in Eaton Square) and a private garden in such a prime central London location is a rarity, and makes this an extremely special project. No 116 has the potential to become one of the best apartments in Belgravia.'

KEYS TO *Blomfield House, Jubilee Place, Chelsea, SW3*

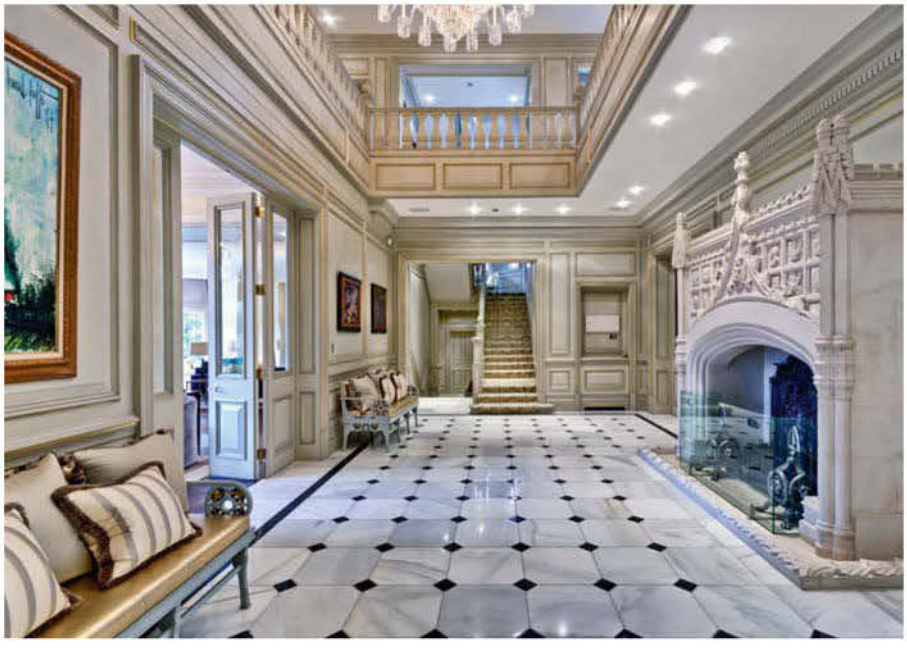
- ACCOMMODATION: 3,720sq ft over five floors including five bedrooms (four ensuite), two reception rooms, library/entertainment room, gym, spa and steam room
- OUTSIDE: Front and rear gardens
- GUIDE PRICE: £11 million

Robert Green of John D Wood & Co (020 7352 1484) says: 'This house is situated in my favourite part of Chelsea, just off Chelsea Green with its fine range of independent shops and restaurants. Newly rebuilt behind the original retained façade, the planning of this three-year project has been managed with the same attention to detail as the finish, resulting in an elegant, well-balanced home with excellent entertaining space. Ideal for hosting Christmas parties – the all-singing spec includes integrated audio throughout the house – there is a gym, spa and steam room to burn off the excess the next day.'

KEYSTO *Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead Village, NW3*

- ACCOMMODATION: An ambassadorial residence of 14,728sq ft over four floors, including seven bedrooms, six bathrooms, four reception rooms, cinema, separate staff quarters, indoor swimming pool, steam and treatment rooms
- OUTSIDE: Swimming pool, summer house and children's soft-play area; carriage driveway with parking for four cars and triple garage
- GUIDE PRICE: £46.5 million

Grant Alexson of Knight Frank (020 7431 8686) says: 'Lyndhurst Road really is the ultimate in luxury living. Set in half an acre and close to Hampstead Village, the location could hardly be better. For me, the panelled study is perfection – the ultimate man cave! Where better to while away the hours, while my family (including the mother-in-law) lose themselves elsewhere – most likely in the spa or cinema of this massive and meticulously renovated house.'



KEYSTO *Hill Top House, Beaulieu, Hampshire*

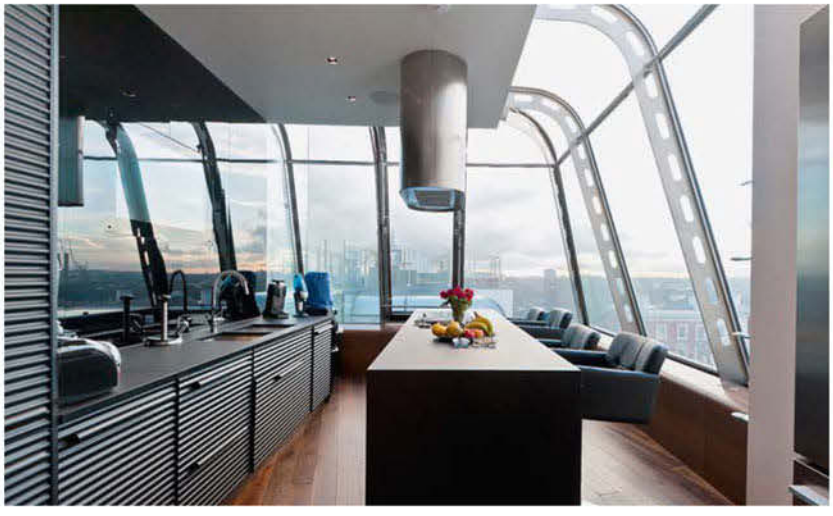
- LOCATION: Four miles from Brockenhurst (Waterloo 90 mins)
- MAIN HOUSE: 4,962sq ft over three floors, including six bedrooms, three reception rooms and a conservatory
- ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION: Two-bedroom cottage, studio
- AMENITIES: Stabling, barn
- GROUNDS: 8.63 acres
- GUIDE PRICE: £2,350,000

Kevin Allen of John D Wood (01590 677233) says: 'I've driven past this gem the past 30 years and always wondered what lay behind its most distinctive façade. Well now I know, and oh what a corker! The Grade II-listed Georgian house exudes charm and character at every level, with some lovely intimate reception rooms. It has a magical setting, surrounded by its own parkland, while a brisk walk puts you either on the Beaulieu River, with its picturesque manorial village or out on the open New Forest National Park. Perfect for walking off the Christmas fare.'

KEYSTO *Yew Tree Farm, Ascott, Warwickshire/Oxfordshire border*

- LOCATION: 11 miles from Banbury (Marylebone 52 mins)
- MAIN HOUSE: 5,135sq ft over three floors, including eight bedrooms and four reception rooms
- ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION: Two two-bedroom cottages plus 2,455sq ft of outbuildings, including two barns, workshop and studio
- AMENITIES: Tennis court, swimming pool, stabling
- GROUNDS: 46 acres
- GUIDE PRICE: £3,950,000

Lindsay Cuthill, of Savills Country Department (020 7016 3780), says: 'For me this is the dream property. There is no road noise, no pylons and it is very private. It's extremely pretty outside and in, with open fireplaces, flagstone floors and shuttered windows, and yet I'd be able to do a little work to it. The gardens are something special – mature with some areas more formal than others, but they don't require a huge amount of work nor look like heavy maintenance. It has everything else you could want; great outdoor entertaining space, a swimming pool, tennis court, croquet lawn and two cottages, with land and great views.'



KEYS TO *The Penthouse, Lansdowne Crescent, Notting Hill, W11*

- ACCOMMODATION: 4,056sq ft over two floors, including six bedrooms, four bathrooms and two reception rooms
- OUTSIDE: 400sq ft roof terrace
- GUIDE PRICE: £12.5 million

Sam Mitchell, CEO of UK Sotheby's International Realty (020 7495 9580), says: 'Of all the properties we are marketing, I would dearly love Lansdowne Crescent on my Christmas list. Located at one of the highest points in the area, virtually every wall of this apartment is made of glass. The panoramic views over London are breathtaking, especially from the terrace. Impeccably designed by Richard Hywel Evans, it sports all the latest technology, from biometric access to concealed plasma screens.'

KEYS TO *Wilton Place, Wilton, Wiltshire*

- LOCATION: Three miles from Salisbury (Waterloo 83 mins)
- MAIN HOUSE: 8,567sq ft over four floors, including seven bedrooms, four reception rooms, gym/media room and wine cellar
- ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION: One-bedroom annex plus outbuildings
- GROUNDS: Two acres
- GUIDE PRICE: £3,950,000

James Mackenzie of Country Houses at Strutt & Parker (020 7629 7282) says: 'Wilton Place would be on my wish list because I love the architecture – all men love the symmetry of Georgian houses. This one, which is Grade II-listed and built in 1795 for the Olivier (as in Sir Laurence) family, is in incredible condition. I wouldn't have the time or the insight to do up a house of this size, and I admire the way it has been refurbished. The grounds aren't too big and even border water. What more could you ask for!'

KEYS TO *Wellington Court, Knightsbridge, SW1*

- ACCOMMODATION: Grade II-listed mansion flat of 2,326sq ft, including a double reception/dining room, three bedroom suites and additional staff bedroom
- TENURE: 150-year leasehold
- PORTERAGE: 24-hour
- GUIDE PRICE: £8,750,000

Shirley Humphrey of Harrods Estates (020 7225 6506) says: 'This triple-aspect apartment really has it all; a fabulous location opposite Hyde Park – a must for me as I really need green spaces – and just a stone's throw from some of the best shops, restaurants and museums in the world. The interior is luxurious with a contemporary edge – and perfect for entertaining friends before dashing off to the theatre: ornate period features and grand ceiling heights, hand-embroidered silk wallpaper, hand-stitched leather and book-matched marble – all teamed with the latest technology and air conditioning throughout.'

KEYS TO *The Astor, Cliveden Deep, Cookham, Berkshire*

- LOCATION: 1.5 miles from Cookham (Paddington, changing at Maidenhead, 38 mins), four miles from Bray, 15 miles from Heathrow, 30 miles from London
- ACCOMMODATION: 8,582sq ft of predominantly single-storey living space with six bedroom suites, flanked by two barns with 2,094sq ft of garaging, workshop and storage
- GROUNDS: 2.28 acres with access to private footpath to the River Thames
- GUIDE PRICE: £3,950,000

Nick Hole-Jones at Hamptons International (020 7493 8222) says: 'The Astor is a total showstopper. Originally part of the model farm that served Lord Astor's Cliveden Estate, this is a property with a rich and scandalous history that has been transformed into the ultimate party pad, incorporating high design and state-of-the-art technology. The central atrium is awe-inspiring, with a steel-and-glass staircase that leads down to a home cinema and up to a galleried library/music mezzanine with a bar in the raised gallery above. Wine buffs will appreciate the spiral cellar, which stores 1,530 bottles.'

KEYS TO *Whitmore House, 15 Craven Street, Covent Garden, WC2*

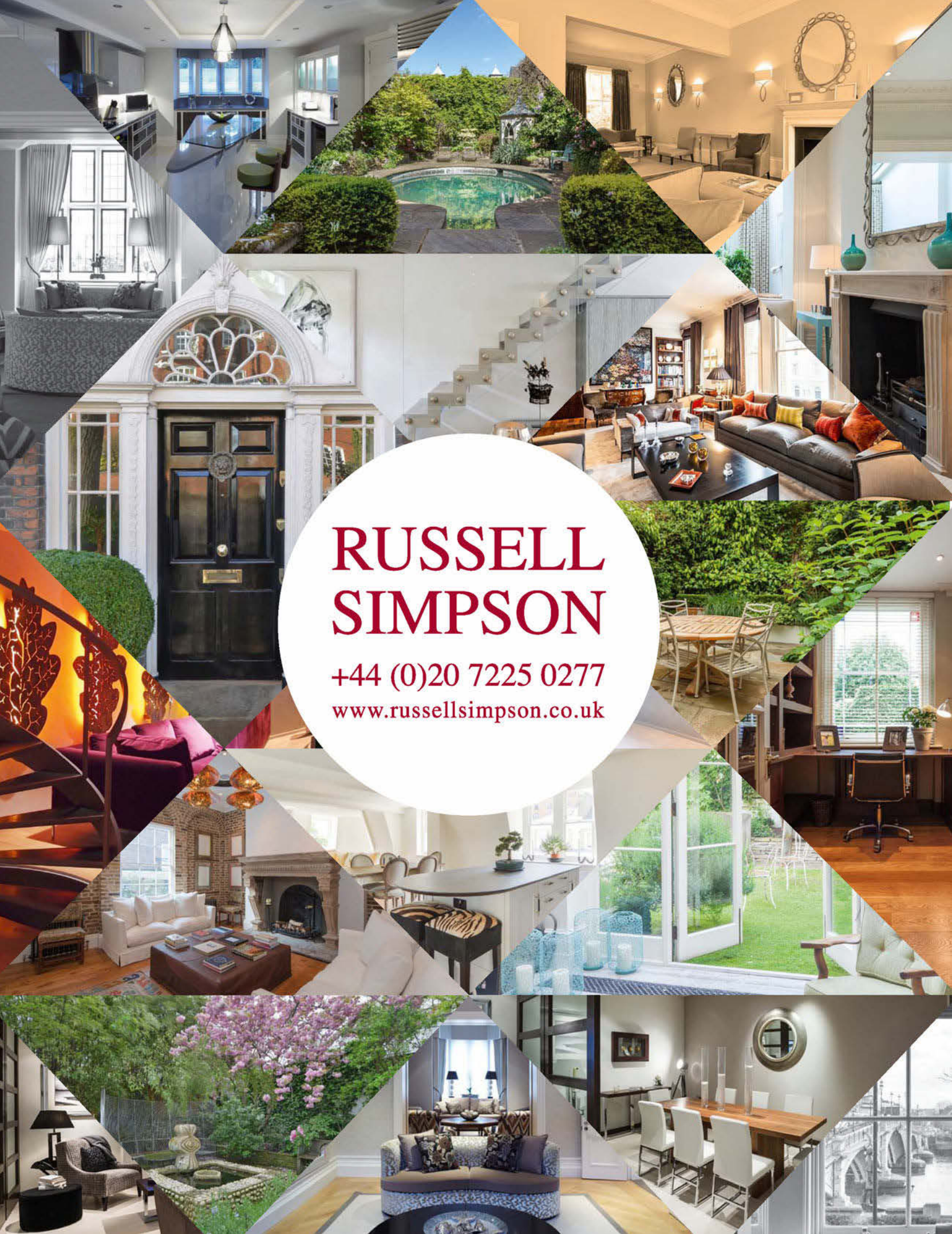
- ACCOMMODATION: 4,450sq ft over six floors (with lift) including four bedroom suites, three reception rooms and media room
- GUIDE PRICE: £6,250,000

Mark Collins, chairman of Residential at CBRE (020 7420 3050), says: 'Located just off the Strand, within a few minutes' walk of Embankment and Charing Cross, this stunning Grade II townhouse combines the very best of Georgian architecture with high quality, 21st-century gizmos. It is very rare to find a property still being used and enjoyed the way it was intended in this part of central London.'

KEYS TO *The Penthouse 127, City Road, Shoreditch, EC1*

- ACCOMMODATION: 2,639sq ft duplex including three bedroom suites and a 1,507sq ft living area
- OUTSIDE: 1,372sq ft terrace with an outdoor kitchen and dining area, a lounge area complete with outdoor TV and a hot tub.
- GUIDE PRICE: £4,750,000

Matt Cobb of Hatton Real Estate (020 7101 2020) says: 'I love how the space is split across two levels 154ft up in the sky. The three bedrooms on the 14th floor offer privacy, while the upper level with its very special roof terrace must be one of the best entertainment spaces in town. Situated above Old Street roundabout, Penthouse 127 is perfectly placed to enjoy the best in urban living. Both a short walk from the City and London's tech industry, it's also at the heart of Shoreditch's buzzing bars and nightlife.'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TOWNHOUSE IN THE SKY

AN INTERVIEW WITH LEE F. MINDEL, DESIGNER OF THE MARQUAND PENTHOUSE AT 11 E68TH ST

What makes the triplex penthouse at 11 East 68th Street so special?

It is a triplex penthouse, a "townhouse in the sky," with high ceilings and large floor plates ... it has substantial outdoor terraces and large expanses of space, with views of the Park and the city. And it has three great qualities: location, location, location!

Is there anything that is unique or specific to the penthouse project?

It is a fantasy three-story townhouse/loft in the sky, both vertical and horizontal, with two levels of outdoor space set amidst the city we love, and adjacent to the best outdoor room in the world, Central Park.

What are the challenges working with a landmark property?

To find the historic voice of the building and be informed by the past but not be a slave to it ... and to understand the sociological changes that have occurred and reflect those in the architectural response.

Were you thinking about a particular person when you designed it?

We were thinking of Mr. Marquand himself ... and [wondering], if he were here today, what would be [a design] respectful of his civic historic and curatorial legacy? He was an early benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a connoisseur of culture, art, architecture and history.

It is apparent that Scandinavian and Norwegian design is a major influence in your work; is this something that can be seen at the new penthouse space?

The Scandinavians, through Finland's Alvar Aalto and the Saarinens (father and son); Sweden's classicist Gunnar Asplund; and Denmark's obsession with quality as seen in the work of Arne Jacobsen, Vilhelm Lauritzen and Kaj Gottlieb: They have all have made use of the elements of modernism but never lost the sense of humanity in architecture. It is their rigor and simplicity that inform our work, as well as the seamlessly integrated environment.

The Marquand is a New York City landmark; how did you tackle incorporating design elements from its past into the future?

The detail was everywhere ... from the limestone facade to an exciting wood-paneled door. The consistent use of detail created a great sense of refinement and luxury. Each design decision was informed by this attention to detail.

How did you get involved in overseeing the restoration and interior design of 11 E 68th Street?

Our developer, HFZ Capital Group, under the leadership of Ziel Feldman and Nir Meir, brought on Douglas Elliman's sales and marketing team headed by Susan DeFranca. Karen Mansour, Madeline Hult Elghanayan and Sabrina Saltiel were on the team from the beginning and met with us weekly for almost two years.

What is your state of mind when designing a new space? Particularly in reference to the outdoor space at the triplex penthouse?

Celebrate a space's context and realize its potential.

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The Estate Office, Station Approach
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Contact Rupert Wyatt
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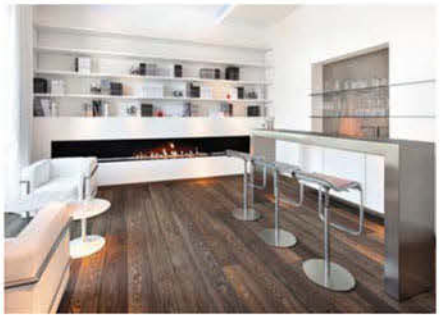
Nice Mont Boron - Between the airport and Monaco



In the highly residential neighbourhood of Mont Boron in Nice, superb private mansion of 550 sqm with separate pavilion in flat grounds of approx. 1,000 sqm. South-west facing, panoramic sea view. This fantastic property consisting of : a living-room of 120 sqm with fireplace, master bedroom of 70 sqm with double bathrooms, dressing-room, 4 others bedrooms with bathrooms and dressing, gym room, laundry, pool-house, sauna. 2 bedroom guest apartment, 1 independent studio, double garage. 15 minutes from Monaco, 15 minutes from the airport. Close to the shops and beach. Ref. 1284. Price on request.

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Update JANUARY DIARY

Smart addresses in and outside London, a historic Italian villa and a Mauritian golfer's paradise

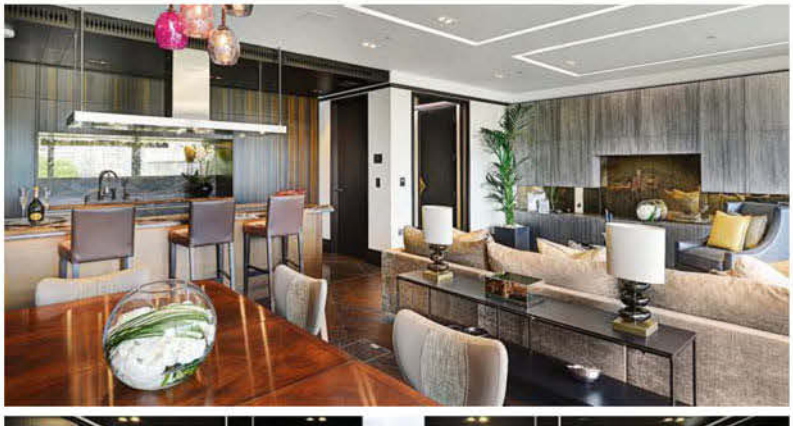
Family-sized

If you're on the market for a house that will comfortably fit all your family (plus a few guests and some hangers-on), here are two superb six-bedroomed properties within easy striking distance of London. Snap up Ouseley Farm House in Oxfordshire and you could be quaffing a pint of foaming ale at the local village pub, before heading back to snuggle up by the Aga or tend the vegetable plot. The house was built in the late 19th century but extended in the 1990s, and comes with three reception rooms, games room/office and a well-planted garden. Keen golfers, meanwhile, should take aim for Kings Oak House in Middlesex, as it backs right onto Northwood Golf Course. But it would also suit any budding film makers, fitness freaks or domestic goddesses, as it comes with its own cinema room, gym and sauna, and incredible design details including a volcanic stone bath, mosaic feature walls and a handbag (or man-bag) display cupboard. With a grand reception hall, cook's kitchen, family room, a summerhouse and even a powder room, there's plenty of space for everyone. And for those who regard golf as a good walk ruined, a footpath leads from the house into beautiful woodland.

Ouseley Farm House, £1.8 million through Savills (01491 843000); Kings Oak House, price £6,950,000 through Savills (01923 824225)

OUSELEY FARM HOUSE

KINGS OAK HOUSE



A landmark address

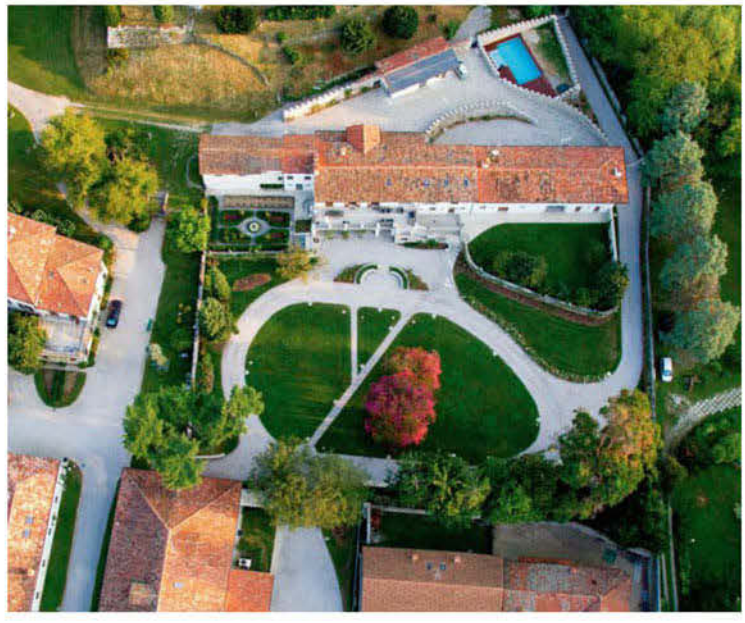
Move in to London's new Cambridge House development and you'll be able to give easy directions to your guests: 'Just head for Tower Bridge and look up.' As addresses go, One Tower Bridge is pretty impressive; so are the pair of showroom apartments where two award-winning interior designers, Casa Forma and Honky, have created an eye-catching and distinctly London aesthetic. The river-facing Cambridge House is one of nine luxe residential buildings at the location, all drawn up by architect Square and Partners; each apartment has between two and four bedrooms and its own private balcony, terrace or garden. The views, needless to say, are incredible, as is the ascent to reach them: for a sci-fi thrill, lifts are programmed to recognise residents and whizz them to the right floor. Inside the two showroom apartments, bespoke materials, furnishings and artwork have been combined with state-of-the-art appliances (wine coolers, built-in coffee machines, Smart Home Technology controls) to create a truly 21st-century London abode. 'The stylish interiors designed by Casa Forma and Honky reflect brilliantly all the values and virtues of One Tower Bridge,' says Harry Lewis, managing director of Berkeley Homes, 'and will help buyers to get a sense of the complete experience of living in this one-of-a-kind development in a truly inspirational setting.'

For details, call 020 7871 0011 or visit www.onetowerbridge.co.uk

LA DOLCE VITA

If you've never skied in Italy before, this is the season to do so. Not only is the country more laid-back than its Alpine neighbours, but the costs are lower, the food and scenery unforgettable and the snow much deeper – during the 2013/14 season, Italy had some of the best snow in Europe. Another good reason is the historic Castello di Brazzà villa, near Udine in the Dolomites, which is perfectly placed for the slopes at Zoncolan, Sesto, Cortina and Nassfeld – all of which have great piste skiing, runs to suit all levels and are close enough to ski for a full day then return to roaring fires, fine regional wines and plates of San Daniele ham. The villa sleeps 22, in eight double or twin rooms, with a dormitory for seven, so is ideal for groups of friends, families or corporate trips – and is extremely accessible from the UK, with Trieste, Treviso or Venice airports nearby. Set in 35 hectares of parkland, and with two pools and a tennis court, it also makes a very individual base for a spring or summer break.

Get your skates on and check availability by calling Russell Cassleton Elliott on 07808 403963/+39 380 106 7849 or emailing info@castellodibrazza.com



GAME PLAN

With the trend for buying off-plan – investing in a new-build property before it is completed – showing no sign of diminishing, some agencies are doing a little planning ahead of their own. Inspired by the fact that more Brits are choosing to buy in this way, Banda Property has assembled a crack team of dedicated experts to help clients navigate a highly competitive marketplace. 'Brits have previously been nervous about buying off-plan, but mindsets are changing,' says Sophie Roberts, its head of property search and acquisition. 'Now there is much more stock around, and there's more choice to sift through, but mistakes can be made.' Her property-search team will help pick the right scheme at the right time and secure a sound investment. 'Our shrewder clients are taking the off-plan route for future investments for their children, and for rental purposes,' says Sophie. 'Conversions are hot spots for investment,' says Sophie, noting Grosvenor Square and Rathbone Square as ones to watch for 2015.

Call 020 7937 9600 or visit www.bandaproperty.co.uk

Fairway to heaven

If you're looking to improve your swing and top up your tan at the same time, there are few better destinations than Mauritius. This sun-kissed Indian Ocean island is fertile ground for luxury beach-and-golf apartments: at Villas Valriche on the south coast, the latest phase is being unveiled, named Fifteen West as it runs alongside the picturesque 14th and 15th fairways of the 18-hole championship Heritage Golf Club. The estate is itself of champion stock, having picked up awards for Best Golf Development and Best Safe Home in Africa, and sits on a former sugar plantation with sparkling beach and ocean views. At Fifteen West there are 30 villas to choose from, with between two and six bedrooms, and a lavish range of interior finishes and furnishings. Robert Green, GM at Abercrombie & Kent International Estates, reckons that 'For the price of an apartment or duplex at most competitor estates, at Fifteen West you can own a spacious private villa with pool and landscaped garden.' From US$659,000.

For more details contact Abercrombie & Kent International Estates on 020 3667 7016 or visit www.akinternationalestates.com

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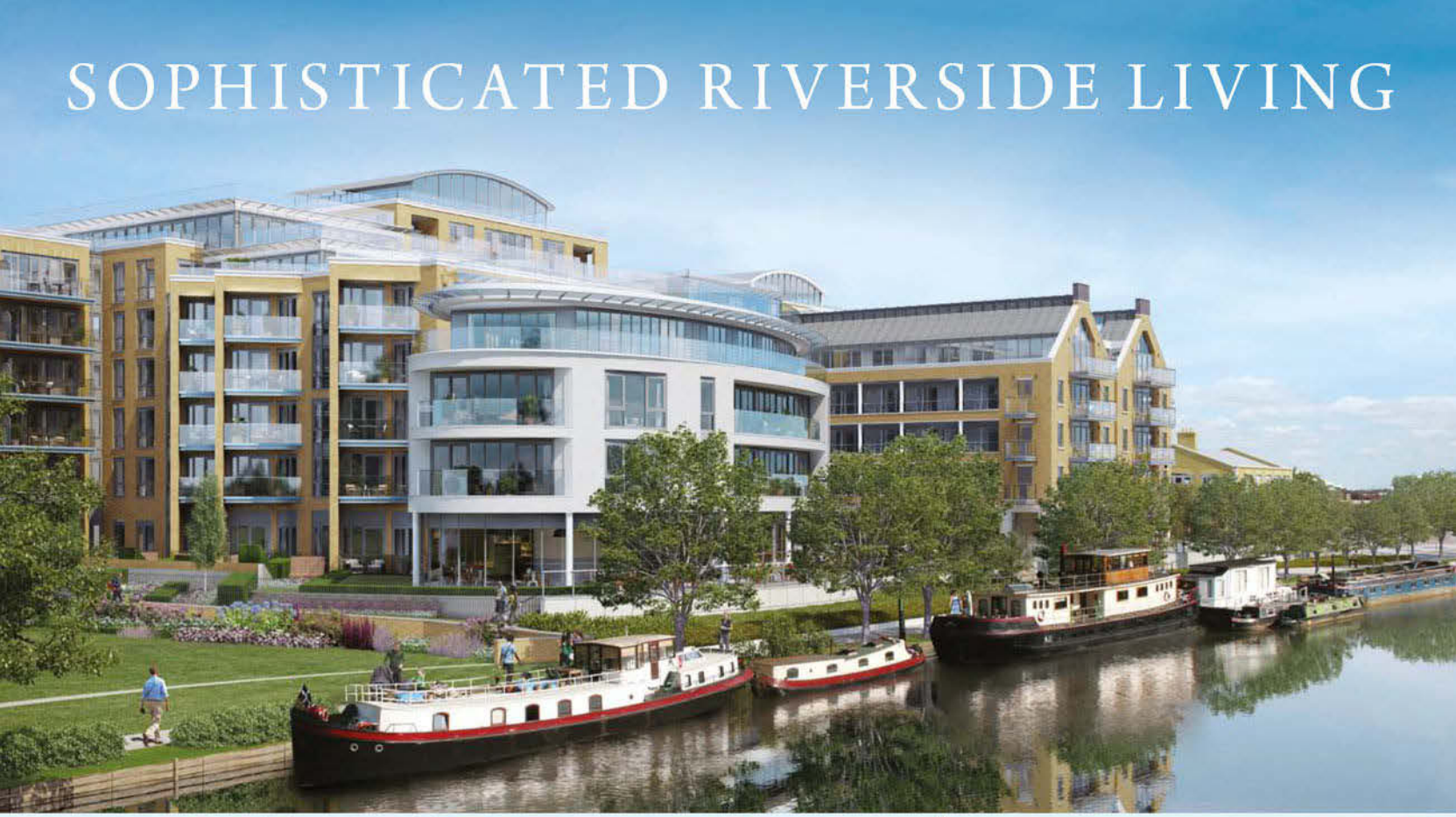

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Drawing of St Dunstan-in-the-West by SPAB Scholar Ptolomy Dean

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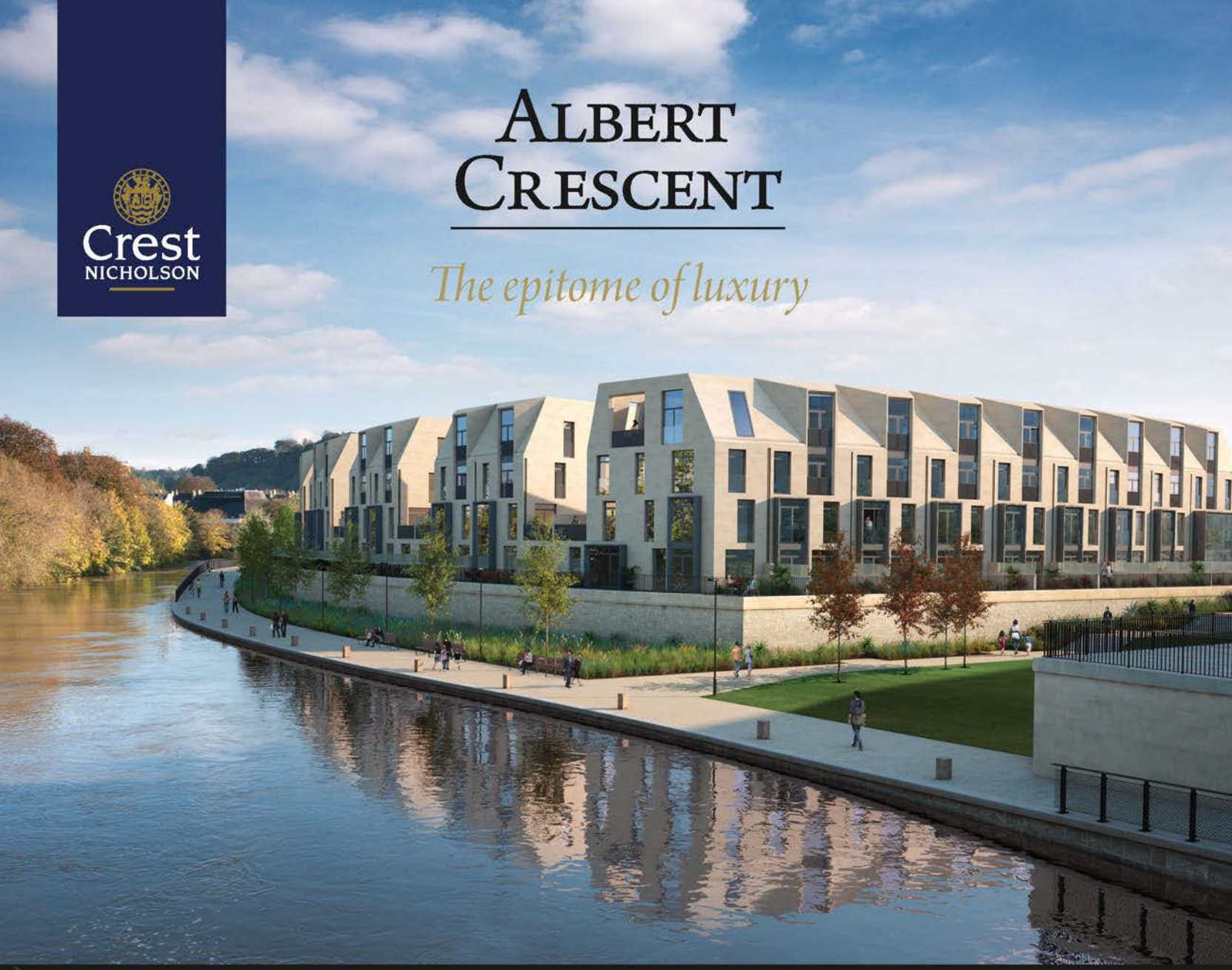

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Representative computer generated images of Wimbledon Hill Park and previous Berkeley interiors. Prices correct at time of print.

Photographed by
ANYA CAMPBELL

What's it like to be...
GEOFF, RICHARD CURTIS'S TORTOISE

I'm not much trouble. Which is lucky, because Mr Curtis (my brother Jeff and I aren't yet on Christian-name terms with him) complains about us continually as it is. We don't do a lot, just potter round his kitchen and occasionally get thrown leftovers of his organic, fairly traded, GM-free, homegrown vegetables, which he washes in chilled Evian. We prefer the defrosted Iceland pizza that his children give us, tbh.

Our biggest excitement was when Mr Curtis wrote an adaptation of the Roald Dahl book *Esio Trot*. It's all about an elderly couple who fall in love via a series of pet tortoises. 'Oh Geoff,' said Jeff. 'This is our moment.' Richard's beautiful and adorable girlfriend Emma was equally excited and drove us to Pinewood Studios for the read-through with Judi Dench and Dustin Hoffman. Sadly, Jeff let himself down by eating one of Mr Hoffman's cheese sandwiches and then pooing on Dame Judi. So I guess we shouldn't have been quite so surprised when we heard that we had failed the audition for the film. I think it hurt most because there wasn't just one tortoise role. Oh no. There were 80. And they didn't have room for a Jeff. Or even a Geoff. Mr Curtis seemed pleased.

There used to be three of us. Gary was my best friend in the world. When Gary was five, Mr Curtis took him to a vet who proclaimed him a woman. They changed his name to Barbara, but Gary never really got over the shock of being a transsexual. Didn't seem to bother Mr Curtis, though. He just thought it was funny. Everyone thinks he's so nice and friendly as he saves the world with his lovely silver-fox hairdo and chatty manner. They don't realise he is a tortoise-hating bastard.

While Geoff retreated into his shell to nurse his wounded ego, Emma Freud revealed all about the life of the Curtis family pets. Richard Curtis's Esio Trot will be broadcast on BBC1 this Christmas.

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Francisca Kellett
TRAVEL EDITOR

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108 WUNDERBAR!
Bagging the best sunloungers isn't the only thing those Germans are good at

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OH MAN!

Oman is the most awesome place in the Middle East right now. It's the sultanate of swing...

MARVEL AT THE DESIGN IN...

ALILA JABAL AKHDAR

It's the utter silence that gets you. When you first arrive, when you first see the view over the edge of an Arabian Grand Canyon, it all seems too vast to be so still. Once a land of rebel tribes, the remote Hajar mountains now host Oman's newest, hippest wilderness hotel – a blend of Asian minimalism and traditional Arabian design. The look is low-key and fabulous: dry-stone walls, eucalyptus-log balconies, a simple juniper branch painted on one white wall in each room, all of which have lavish freestanding marble baths. There are studded antique doors, natural stone floors, big old beams of dark iroko wood, delicate steel friezes of carved roses and frankincense wafting everywhere. And a black-granite infinity pool looking out over that canyon, with the endless stillness of the mountains all around.

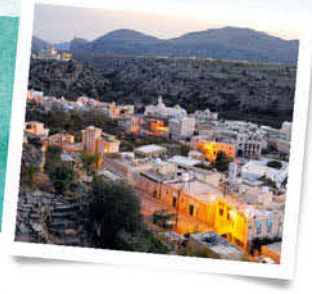
TAKE THE KIDS TO...

ZIGHY BAY

This is one of the best family hotels on the planet. Bold statement? Yes, but we're sticking with it. It's the kind of place where kids actually cry when they leave. And are actually silent when they arrive, so impressed are they by the bumpity-bumping through Martian-red mountains, the climb up, up, over a peak and then the whoosh! down to a perfect bay of white sand and blue water. If you want to impress them even more, paraglide into the resort – bloody terrifying, but they might just respect you for it (a tiny bit). Zighy Bay itself is all sandy tracks, goats prancing between date palms and low-rise Fred Flintstone houses – honed rock and rough wood, with sparkling plunge pools and about a million different places to lounge around in the Arabian sun. There's a pool, a spa, watersports galore and various brilliant restaurants (you'll want to fall face first into the lamb tagine at Shua Shack). And there's a kids' club that has the best invention we've ever seen, anywhere: an evening cinema club, so the offspring can scoff popcorn and watch Disney while parents skip off for a properly peaceful supper. Whoever thought of this should win the Nobel Peace Prize.

HAVE AN ADVENTURE WITH...

Mantis Extreme, which arranges trips into the wilds of the Hajar mountains for hiking and birdwatching, and glamping in the Wahiba Sands desert. Haggle for silver in the ancient city of Nizwa, drink sweet tea in a remote village or seek out the mischevious genie that is said to swirl around the magnificent Bahla Fort. *mantisextreme.com*



DO THE SPA IN...

THE CHEDI MUSCAT

The Chedi is 10 years old. Can you believe it? You'd never guess – it still looks as fresh-faced as the day it popped up on the edge of the Muscat coast, all cool white domes and swaying palms and glittering pools. The best rooms are still the beachfront villas in the Chedi Club Suite, with their private terraces and giant sunken marble bathtubs. But the real cherry on its birthday cake is the newly nipped and tucked spa. It's big, and it's got everything: ayurvedic treatments, Balinese therapies, seriously good massages. If you're really in knots, go for the Chedi Jade, a mixture of shiatsu, Balinese, Thai and Swedish techniques. Then slink off, loose and floppy, to the poolside bar for sundowners and shisha as the sun sets over the water.

BOOK IT SCOTT DUNN (SCOTTDUNN.COM; 020 8682 5075) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS COMBINING **THE CHEDI MUSCAT** AND **ALILA JABAL AKHDAR** FROM £1,620, INCLUDING FLIGHTS WITH OMAN AIR, TRANSFERS AND BREAKFAST. IT ALSO OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS AT **ZIGHY BAY** FROM £1,935, INCLUDING FLIGHTS WITH EMIRATES, TRANSFERS AND BREAKFAST.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

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Photograph taken at Villa Sheherezade
- popularly known as "Taj Mahal of the Mediterranean" at 16:00

Dubrovnik. Dream until
the dream comes true.

YOU SEXY THINGS

These make us weak at the knees

TATLER AWARD WINNER
BRAINS AND BEAUTY

THE BRANDO TETIAROA, FRENCH POLYNESIA

OBJECT OF DESIRE Don't expect Hollywood stills or Godfatherly growls. The only hint that Tetiaroa was once Marlon Brando's private atoll is the cocktail list, which includes an eponymous mojito laced with coconut rum. It was the actor's dream that this ravishing bracelet of 12 deserted *motus* (islets) remain as pristine as the day he bought them for £125,000 in 1967. And so they are, except that last July one sprouted this tranquil eco-resort. Humpback whales breach at breakfast, just-hatched turtles power across the sands after dinner – all manna from heaven for the marine researchers at the Ecostation. Sea creatures aside, exclusivity is a given: the Brando can only be reached by private plane. Everything's included, and then some: champagne, spa treatments, lagoon cruises, island-made honey...

SEXIEST SPOT Your slick beachside villa, a mere stagger from the sea, which comes with its own infinity plunge pool and an alfresco bath beneath the South Pacific stars. Opt for an airy two-bedroomed one for the full outside-in experience.

WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR The Varua Spa, lost in the coconut palms, has hit-the-spot Polynesian massages. Book the treehouse suite for a signature Varua Mana treatment that will leave you as helpless and sprawling as a starfish.

COOL OFF In Les Mutinés, the small, calm, cream and white restaurant by Guy Martin, chef at the two-Michelin-star Le Grand Véfour in Paris. Treats include scallops slow-cooked in salt and mahimahi with ginger. ▷

BOOK IT TURQUOISE HOLIDAYS (TURQUOISEHOLIDAYS.CO.UK; 01494 678 400) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £9,530, ALL-INCLUSIVE, INCLUDING FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS, DAILY SPA TREATMENT AND ACTIVITIES.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ISTOCK, TIM MCKENNA, SHUTTERSTOCK

ONE&ONLY HAYMAN ISLAND
WHITSUNDAY ISLANDS, AUSTRALIA

OBJECT OF DESIRE She's been around a while, this one, but a bit of attention – £43m, since you ask – has given her the confidence boost she needed. Now the 64-year-old Whitsunday beauty looks revitalised and ravishing, with plenty of polished white stone.
SEXIEST SPOT This is a proper resort, with 160 sleek suites, villas and penthouses. Angle for the Diane von Furstenberg-designed one. Failing that, the food will fix things: Fire serves Wagyu beef that dissolves on your tongue. There are six restaurants, so no chance of boredom.
WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR Endless watery activities: diving, snorkelling, sailing, wakeboarding, windsurfing and zooming over the Great Barrier Reef in a seaplane. Or just lounge on one of the white-sand beaches with a freshly chopped-open coconut resting on your belly.
COOL OFF Or indeed, heat up, with a Bodyism session in the fitness centre, followed by some calming lengths in the pool – SEVEN times the size of an Olympic pool.

TATLER OFFER
SAVE UP TO £670 PER COUPLE. SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £3,155, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK/TATLER; 0161 826 2866).*

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £470 (RAFFLES.COM; 00 90 212 924 0200).

RAFFLES ISTANBUL
ISTANBUL, TURKEY

OBJECT OF DESIRE Hello Zorlu Centre, hello Raffles and hello Turkey's most expensive real-estate project EVER. True to form, Raffles has taken the money-no-object approach to hotel design: lashings of marble, acres of glass and silky-smooth wood.
SEXIEST SPOT Step through floor-to-ceiling windows onto your balcony – every room has one – and watch the busy world go by. Then go back inside to drool over the art. Jean-François Rauzier's hallucinatory 'hyperphoto' of the Dolmabahçe Palace will have you agog; Martin Dawe's gargantuan bronze *Lavinia* will have Henry Moore turning in his grave.
WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR Spin round Zorlu's designer shops, grab a bite (Jamie Oliver's here; Tom Aikens too), or catch a show in the super-sophisticated performing arts centre.
COOL OFF Float your boat in the indoor pool beneath a glittering galaxy of suspended glass droplets.

VIRA VIRA HACIENDA HOTEL
PUCON, CHILE

OBJECT OF DESIRE What with the chickens, ponies and paddocks dotted with cheering dairy cows, Vira Vira is a bit like falling face first into a Swiss fairytale. There's even a dairy. But just when you expect Heidi to come prancing round the corner, Volcano Villarica looms overhead and you know you're not in Europe anymore.
SEXIEST SPOT Melt into a wooden hot tub on the candlelit riverbank with a pisco sour in hand. Then over to the lagoon-top decking you go, for an all-organic dinner where pretty much everything on your plate has been plucked/dragged from the eco-farm around you.
WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR Sling on a poncho and ride across monkey puzzle-fringed hills with Rodolfo 'from Dorset' (his granddad came to Chile in the 1900s).
COOL OFF Head to the conical-roofed Ruca (inspired by native Mapuche houses) for a cooking lesson, yoga class, a spot of painting or some wine tasting. It's like summer camp, but without the scraped knees and scrotty youths.

BOOK IT THE EXPLORATIONS COMPANY (EXPLORATIONSCOMPANY.COM; 01367 850566) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £2,095, INCLUDING TRANSFERS.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK, ADVERTISING ARCHIVE. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

ANDAZ TOKYO
TORANOMON HILLS, JAPAN

OBJECT OF DESIRE The views, over the *entire* city. This place is tucked between floors 47 and 52 in a seemingly never-ending skyscraper, so it's ALL about what you can see through those spotless expanses of glass. The 164 rooms are positively gargantuan by Tokyo standards, but best of the bunch are the suites, each with a scoop-your-jaw-off-the-floor sweep over the glittering skyline. Decor is minimal, with crisp white linen and wooden partitions that you can slide around like Tetris tiles. The only traditional touch is the Japanese tub, big enough for you and a team of sumo wrestlers.

SEXIEST SPOT The rooftop, which has both an indoor and an outdoor bar, where you can sit and knock back every sake known to man (although we recommend you don't).

WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR Clay pot-baked chicken and lobster poached with wasabi at Andaz Tavern, which does a neat line in Euro-Japanese fusion food.

COOL OFF In the AO spa overlooking the Imperial Palace. Do some laps in the 20m swimming pool, chill out in the floating jet bath and zone out with an Oriental Healing massage.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £205 (HYATT.COM; 00 81 3 6830 1234).

TWO-TIERED INFINITY POOL, WHITER-THAN-DAZ-WHITE SANDY BEACHES AND A CLIFFSIDE RESTAURANT WITH AN AWARD-WINNING CHEF? YES PLEASE! AFTER A THREE-YEAR CLOSURE, MALLIOUHANA IN ANGUILLA HAS BEEN SPIFFED UP BY THOSE CLEVER AUBERGE FOLKS. PACK YOUR BAGS ASAP AS EARLY-BIRD PACKAGES ARE UP FOR GRABS. (MALLIOUHANA.COM)

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £255, INCLUDING BREAKFAST (MELIA.COM; 00 34 971 330 051).

ME HOTEL
IBIZA, SPAIN

OBJECT OF DESIRE *Que bueno!* A grown-up, beautifully designed and brilliantly run hotel has finally opened on Ibiza. Say *buenos dias* to the ME in Santa Eulalia, a chilled-out haven in the midst of all that sweaty madness. There are glorious seascapes, gleaming all-white suites and spot-on seafood. And, if you actually quite fancied checking out one of those wild pool parties, Nikki Beach is right next door.

SEXIEST SPOT The rooftop deck, for its practically deserted plunge pool, stupidly comfy sun loungers and dazzling panoramas of the sun sinking into the Med.

WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR The Jet by ME package, which whisks you off to Ibiza via the hotel's swish private jet and includes daily treatments at the rooftop spa and your own dedicated 'aura manager' (trust us, you want one).

COOL OFF Hop onto the hotel's boat for the one-hour trip to Formentera, where you can tuck into salt-baked fish and homemade plum cake at the white-tented Juan y Andrea restaurant and splash around in the sparkliest turquoise water this side of Barbados. ▷

BOOK IT ABERCROMBIE & KENT (ABERCROMBIEKENT.CO.UK; 0845 485 1142) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £1,500, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

POINT YAMU BY COMO

PHUKET, THAILAND

OBJECT OF DESIRE Point Yamu's boxy architecture hides a lip-bitingly beautiful interior. Swan up the stone stairs and you'll find a coolly androgynous space, where broken mosaic pillars frame the turquoise Andaman Sea – you'll want to strike a pose against one of the soaring concrete columns wearing nothing but a white tux. Rooms are equally self-assured, with acres of alabaster walls, bright blue cushions, cool lamps and cavernous bathrooms.

SEXIEST SPOT Many of the suites come with glowing plunge pools well suited to slippery aqua-embraces. For serious strokes (don't be filthy, we mean SPORT), head to the 100m swimming pool, where staff proffer cold, scented towels and refreshing fruity sorbets between laps.

WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR Slow your pulse with a Thai Lanna massage at the awards-heavy COMO Shambhala spa.

COOL OFF The hotel doesn't have its own beach, but nip to the nearby pier and you can hop on a longtail boat to sail to the pearly sands of neighbouring Rang island.

LA RESIDENCE

FRANSCHHOEK, SOUTH AFRICA

OBJECT OF DESIRE The location is utterly swoonworthy, tucked beneath the Franschhoek mountains with sweeping vistas of endless, emerald vineyards. The bedrooms are vast, peaceful and filled with fascinating objets d'art collected from around the world – one is like a sun-filled Provençal villa, the next is a moody-red Oriental boudoir. All are basically romance on a stick.

SEXIEST SPOT Slink around on the terrace at sundown with something chilled in your hand, and gaze out over the little lake bathed in a honeyed light while swifts swoop overhead.

WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR The food is sensational. Opt for the chef's table and get pleasantly sozzled at the skilled hands of the ebullient sommelier, while the chef knocks out dish after dazzling dish: a grilled kingklip with scallops that sings of the sea; hand-made pasta with vegetables so fresh they might have just vaulted out of the kitchen garden.

COOL OFF With a walking tour of the local vineyards – not exactly sobering, but then this is wine country, so bottoms up.

BOOK IT AFRICA TRAVEL (AFRICATRAVEL.COM; 020 7843 3580) OFFERS FOUR NIGHTS FROM £2,095, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ADVERTISING ARCHIVES, ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

THE MARKER WATERFRONT RESORT QUITE LITERALLY MARKS THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST NEW HOTEL BUILT IN KEY WEST'S OLD TOWN SINCE 1994. NO PRESSURE, THEN. TROPICAL-COOL ROOMS, CARPETS OF LUSH VELVETY GRASS, SECLUDED SWIMMING POOLS (YES, PLURAL) WITH POOLSIDE COCKTAIL SERVICE... WE RECKON IT'LL MAKE THE GRADE. (THEMARKERKEYWEST.COM)

BOOK IT BELLINI TRAVEL (BELLINITRAVEL.COM; 020 7602 7602) OFFERS FIVE NIGHTS FROM £450, INCLUDING BREAKFAST AND A WINE TASTING.

MONACI DELLE TERRE NERE SICILY, ITALY

OBJECT OF DESIRE Mount Etna blows its top theatrically behind, the Ionian Sea twinkles in front and clementine groves jostle for space with fig trees on this blissfully stylish organic estate.
SEXIEST SPOT The freestanding bath with crater views in the Suite Amabile – one of 15 rustic-chic suites dotted about the grounds. You'll wish you had less of a conscience (and a bigger suitcase) so that you could steal everything in the rooms: the B&B Italia sofas, the Perspex bedside tables, even the floating beds set against walls of blackest volcanic rock. Rough on the skin, by the way, but in a nice way.
WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR The food puts the 'oh!' into slow. Just-stopped-flapping fish, sun-ripened tomatoes and flowering courgettes with zero miles (they grow 150 types of fruit and their own veggies) are all eaten languidly with lots and lots of wine on the terrace of the main putty-pink 19th-century villa.
COOL OFF There's an outdoor bar and an infinity pool for lazy laps, yoga on the lawns and cinema under the stars (divinely, the rooms are without televisions).

THE SETAI MIAMI, USA

OBJECT OF DESIRE The Setai is all about calm and discretion; if you came looking for pool parties, best take your beach balls elsewhere. It's a Balinese-style oasis of omm in a city of bouncing bosoms and drag queens.
SEXIEST SPOT You may struggle to venture beyond your teak-floored room, where the wall-to-wall day bed demands horizontal lounging.
WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR Formerly the Dempsey Vanderbilt, this art-deco jewel sits bang on South Beach, at the top of Ocean Drive. Spend the day lolling by one of three proper-sized pools, each a different temperature, or dip a toe in the sparkling Atlantic just beyond.
COOL OFF In between facials in the spa, recover over grilled mahimahi on the oceanfront terrace, where the Taittinger flows like Perrier. Who needs a pool party?

TATLER OFFER

SAVE UP TO £1,180 PER COUPLE. FIVE NIGHTS FROM £3,295, INCLUDING FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK/TATLER; 0161 826 2866).*

ANDAZ PENINSULA PAPAGAYO GUANACASTE, COSTA RICA

OBJECT OF DESIRE The design – going jungle-lite has never been so stylish. The hotel is set on a protected spit of land on Costa Rica's northern Pacific coast, and local architect Ronald Zürcher has taken inspiration from the wild surrounds. It's nature-tastic: the lobby is a cocoon-shaped pod open to the elements and the rooms are all squirrelled away in earth-and-stone structures that blend cleverly into the greenery.
SEXIEST SPOT The private plunge pool in your suite, looking over the glittering Pacific. Inside, pad about on polished cement and shower *à deux* in the walk-in rain shower.
WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR The wake-me-up volcanic treatments in the treetop treatment rooms at the spa.
COOL OFF Go surfing, laze on the volcanic-sand beach, yomp through the rainforest or zip over to the glitzy marina. Howler monkeys may swing past your balcony, but that doesn't mean a superyacht would be amiss...

BOOK IT RAINBOW TOURS (RAINBOWTOURS.CO.UK; 020 7666 1260) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £2,330, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

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THE PIG ON THE BEACH STUDLAND BAY, ENGLAND

The dish Not pig, but still hugging the Pig group's philosophy of locally sourced and homegrown produce: so-fresh-you-feel-a-bit-guilty Poole Bay lobster, served with a just-foraged salad. We would like to eat this every day, forever.

The location The latest incarnation from the piggies' sty is on a sweep of Dorset beach, with the sort of lung-bursting views – onto the great chalk stacks of Old Harry Rocks and all the way to the Isle of Wight – that build up an enthusiastic appetite. People come here to sleep, yes, but really they come to eat – in the pretty greenhouse dining room and out on the sun-drenched terrace. So you must try the lobster, but you mustn't miss the home-smoked cod with samphire and butter beans, and the chargrilled cuttlefish with Hampshire chorizo, and the rhubarb cheesecake with rosehip syrup, all from within a 25-mile radius. Then, when you've had your fill of the food and the view, you can gently toddle upstairs to one of the 23 chilled and charming rooms. Top of the pops is the two-story thatched dovecote with rolltop bath (chuck in a bottle of Bramley sweet orange and lavender bubble bath and stew gently).

While you're here Stroll down to the white-sand beaches to skim stones, or stride up into the heathland for a proper hunger-raiser. And if you decide you'd rather like to gobble up the entire kitchen garden, take a dip in the Listerine-blue waters at Durdle Door. You'll be burning calories for days.

Don't miss The pig-out breakfast: bantam's eggs, freshly baked pastries, home-toasted granola, and then – THEN – go the whole hog with a thick, free-range bacon sarnie.

TATLER
AWARD WINNER
FEAST AND FLOP

BOOK IT
DOUBLE, FROM £135 (THEPIGHOTEL.COM; 01929 450288).

GOLD-PLATED

Dishes we LOVE – at places that are pretty yummy themselves

BOOK IT

DOUBLE, FROM £120 (HOTELSAHRAI.COM; 00 212 535 94 03 32).

HOTEL SAHRAI FEZ, MOROCCO

The dish Djaj mhamer: succulent roast cockerel stuffed with couscous and raisins. It's the creation of young female chef Hasna Ait El Hadim, who keeps up the Moroccan tradition of mother-to-daughter recipes.
The location Hotel Sahrai, poised on its own hill, is a breath of super-fresh air in this super-trad city (which you really must visit – Fez is what Marrakesh was 40 years ago, but with fewer hippies). Minimalism meets ornate plaster walls, and natural stone floors are sliced up with little canals; there's an infinity pool, Givenchy spa, French brasserie and hip rooftop bar with dreamy views over the city.
While you're here Tour the medina with a guide who'll know the ins and outs (and dos and don'ts and haggles and haggle-ye-nots) of this tangle of historic madrasas, food stalls and workshops.
Don't miss An icy cucumbertini – the bar staff were trained by cocktail maestro Thierry Hernandez of the Plaza Athénée in Paris.

BOOK IT

DOUBLE, FROM £150 (NO131.COM; 01242 822939).

No. 131 CHELTENHAM, ENGLAND

The dish Steak – raw/cooked, on/off the bone, 8/10/12/32oz (or, madly, 3lb côte de boeuf Welsh Wagyu for £120). All sorts of sauces from fresh horseradish (with real bite) to Stilton hollandaise. And the sides! Epic duck-fat fries, Jersey royals and buttered samphire.
The location Smack-bang in the middle of Cheltenham's quaint promenade, this 11-room hotel retains classic Georgian features but has a modern sense of cool. It's cosy too: vast beds, hot-water bottles at night, board games, jars of homemade cookies and huge armchairs. The bar and restaurant, Crazy Eights, makes you want to behave a bit badly – there's just so much good booze being served in retro cut glass.
While you're here Shop. You'll find useful gifty boutiques, plus little contemporary art galleries and sweet tea shops.
Don't miss Local ice cream in every flavour under the sun: Rob Gibson of Dolcetti delivers it himself from Cirencester. He's an actual genius.

BOOK IT

DOUBLE, FROM £225, INCLUDING BREAKFAST (THENORMAN.COM; 00 972 3 543 5555).

THE NORMAN TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

The dish The artichoke heart with blue cheese and pangrattato served in the Library Bar is a full-on umami fix.
The location This is one of several places you can eat at the Norman – there's also a brilliant spin-off of the cult London Japanese restaurant Dinings. The hotel was designed by David D'Almada (who revamped Mayfair's Arts Club), and the 50 rooms pay homage to its White City Bauhaus location, with lots of art-deco flourishes. It's superbly run, with utterly charming service (not always a given in Israel), and there's a citrus garden and rooftop pool.
While you're here The Tel Aviv food scene is sizzling right now. Make you sure book into Café Noir – the Wolseley of Tel Aviv – which is just opposite and famous for its chicken schnitzel.
Don't miss The city's main food market, Shuk Ha'Carmel, is seven minutes' walk away.

BOOK IT

RAINBOW TOURS (RAINBOWTOURS.CO.UK; 020 7666 1260) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS FROM £2,935, INCLUDING FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

VINA VIK MILLAHUE VALLEY, CHILE

The dish Slow-cooked veal shank with beetroot purée and broccoli foam, and a bottle or two of Vik wine. The food (and the wine) in this vineyard hideaway is very local – and sensational.
The location The hotel is an architectural beauty of dark wood and glass, letting all those Millahue Valley vineyards roll right in. Each room is designed by a different artist – one has Japanese shutters, another a full-wall painting of two giant clinking wine glasses (most apt), yet another a bathroom completely covered with euro and US cents.
While you're here Ride among the vines with a local *huaso* (Chilean horseman), dismounting at the bodega to sample the wine, made mainly from cabernet sauvignon and carménère: completely scrummy.
Don't miss 'Wine therapy' in the spa – exfoliation with grape pips, then a massage using oil steeped in the antioxidant polyphenols found in red wine. Seems a waste of polyphenols, but who are we to judge?

ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM GALE. PHOTOGRAPHS: KLAVS MELLENTHIN, CHRIS TERRY, SIVAN ASKAYO

TATLER
AWARD WINNER
MOST FUN EVER

HAM YARD HOTEL

Tim and Kit Kemp already have seven ravishing hotels in London and creating Ham Yard has taken five years. But, by golly, we're glad they took the trouble to sneak in yet another. And snuck in it has, in a derelict plot behind Piccadilly that was all grey and boarded up, but has now broken into song. Kit's design is – politely – totally bonkers, in the most perfectly stylish and colourful way: a raspberry scribble-print sofa here, a mint-stripe there, retro lamps, chintzy headboards, artwork of all shapes. Everywhere are details that flicker and wink at you, such as the tailors' mannequins in each room and the digital-clock installation in the lobby. The rooms are so cosy you wouldn't think twice about snuggling under your duvet to watch a film and eat popcorn from the minibar. But don't stay there too long as Ham Yard is riotously fun. Trot down to the sceney restaurant for sweetcorn soup with crab tortellini, tender veal cutlet and all 12 layers of the chocolate, praline and Frangelico cake. Or lounge on the rooftop terrace, snoop around the kooky boutiques in the courtyard and chill in the Soholistic spa. And don't forget the Fifties bowling alley, imported from Texas. Afterwards, head to the neon-lit Dive Bar or get out on the dancefloor, which has two giant driftwood crocodiles hanging nearby. So, yes, totally bonkers. And one helluva good party.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £310 (FIRMDALEHOTELS.COM; 020 3642 2000).

CITY SLICKEST

London's newest destination landmarks: glamorous, gorgeous, glorious

THE BEAUMONT

The thing that's so clever about Chris Corbin and Jeremy King is their ability to transport guests to different worlds: Parisian grandeur at the Wolseley; Mitteleuropean chic at the Delaunay. Now they've done it with a hotel. At the Beaumont, you're in Roaring Twenties New York. The place is pure theatre – you half expect Fred Astaire to tap-dance across the lobby's black-and-cream floor. And the attention to detail is supreme: treacle-coloured wood, leather tub chairs, divine dials above the lift doors and, oh, the artwork – Singer Sargent-esque portraits of ladies in pearls and fur. Then there's the giant Antony Gormley sculpture of a cubist man out front. It's called ROOM and you can sleep inside it. But it doesn't jar with the art-deco fabulousness of the other rooms and their grey shagreen details and spot-on period furniture. The bathrooms are a glory of marble and eau de Nil panelling. There are proper light switches and hefty hangers, each with a Beaumont plaque (which will become the most stolen item since the Quaglino's ashtray in the Nineties). The Colony Grill Room restaurant is fabulous, serving American classics such as shrimp po' boy and brisket. It's elegant and erudite and has become London's most sophisticated reservation. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £395, INCLUDING BREAKFAST (THEBEAUMONT.COM; 020 7499 1001).

ZETTER IS ABOUT TO OPEN A NEW TOWNHOUSE – THE THIRD IN THE ZETTER FAMILY – IN MARYLEBONE. THIS QUIRKY NEWBIE IS STYLED AS 'WICKED UNCLE SEYMOUR'S' PAD. EXPECT VINTAGE-INSPIRED INTERIORS AND KILLER COCKTAILS. (ZETTER.COM)

THE HOXTON, HOLBORN

Best be honest: the Hoxton group's second hotel looks a bit like a breeze block and sits on a rather uninspiring stretch of High Holborn. But none of that matters, because it's injected some serious East End cool into this strait-laced part of town. The decor is hipster heaven: exposed brick, industrial lighting and reclaimed furniture. Bedrooms are beatnik boltholes, with chunky headboards and wallpaper printed with custom Charles Dickens or bulldog motifs. The real buzz is around the public spaces, which are run by Soho House. Chow down on spare ribs and truffle fries at Hubbard & Bell restaurant, then head to the lobby, iPad in hand, for a white negroni. There's also a Chicken Shop, a Holborn Grind café and a Cheeky Nail Bar. Look out, east London – Midtown has arrived. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £70 (THEHOXTON.COM; 020 7661 3000). ▷

NOBU SHOREDITCH HOTEL IS ON TRACK TO OPEN IN EARLY 2016. WE'RE EXPECTING PARED-BACK DESIGN, ACRES OF GLASS – AND THE TITANS OF TECH POWER-LUNCHING OVER BLACK COD. (NOBUHOTELS.COM)

ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM GALE

SHANGRI-LA AT THE SHARD

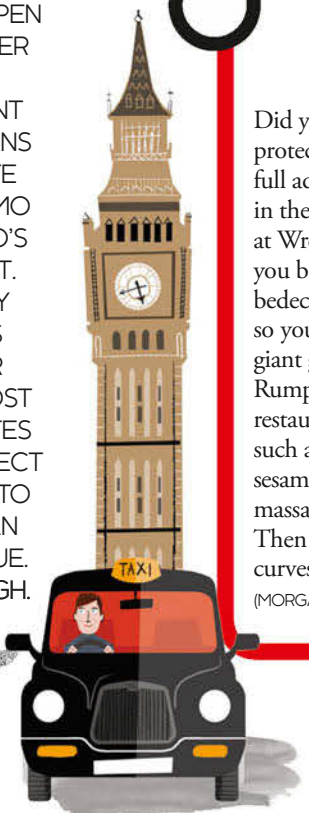
Step into your room and try, if you can, to lift your jaw up off the floor. This is the most gobsmacking view in London, no question. At 1,000ft, Renzo Piano's Shard is the highest building in Western Europe, and, looking down on the ant-like pedestrians scampering below, it's impossible not to slip into a zen-like calm. The wonders of the capital lie all around but inside is pure Orient: Asian-inspired decor, dim sum served alongside eggs royale at breakfast, and utterly courteous service. Lounge by the pool by day, staring at those views, or perch up against the glass in the bar by night, where it feels a tiny bit like you're in Shanghai. There are a few oddities: Ting restaurant serves Modern European fare when you'd expect Chinese (still delicious, though) and with all that glass around you, there's a strange sensation of being on show. Still, this is the trophy sightseer's ultimate layover.
BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £450 (SHANGRI-LA.COM; 020 7234 8088).

...IN THE CLUB

Prefer something a bit more discreet? Something with all the finery of a big hotel but less of the fuss and bustle? **The Arts Club** (theartsclub.co.uk), a favourite hangout of Gwyneth and Prince Harry, is opening 16 rooms in its Dover Street townhouse in the spring. Guests will be able to lounge around members' areas all they like. The **Artist Residence** (artistresidencelondon.co.uk), meanwhile, has given sleepy Pimlico a pick-me-up. This former pub has 10 rooms filled with original artists' prints and eclectic furniture, with trendy Brighton restaurant 64 Degrees holding court downstairs too. Over in Notting Hill, an area until now devoid of a good local hotel, the **Laslett** (living-rooms.co.uk) will open its doors in the summer. They're knocking through five mammoth stucco houses to create a relaxed 'neighbourhood hangout'. We're officially excited.

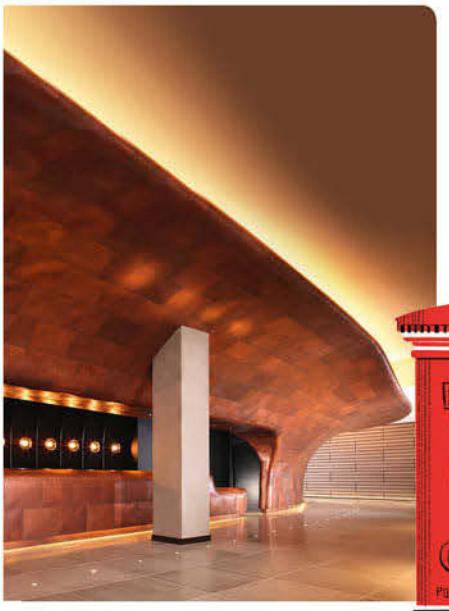
FOUR SEASONS HAS SNAPPED UP GRAND OLD TEN TRINITY SQUARE, THE FORMER PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY HQ. THE TOWER HILL SITE WILL OPEN AS A 98-ROOM HOTEL IN SPRING 2016. (FOURSEASONS.COM)

THE LANESBOROUGH HAS THROWN OPEN ITS DOORS AFTER A STACK OF REFURBISHMENT WORK. THE PLANS MARK THE LATE DESIGN SUPREMO ALBERTO PINTO'S FINAL PROJECT. THIS REGENCY LANDMARK IS FAMOUS FOR HAVING THE MOST EXPENSIVE SUITES IN LONDON. EXPECT HIGH ROLLERS TO BE FORMING AN ORDERLY QUEUE. (LANESBOROUGH.COM)



THE MONDRIAN AT SEA CONTAINERS

Did you know that views of St Paul's are protected? The Morgans Hotel Group has taken full advantage, opening the first Mondrian hotel in the UK in Sea Containers House – and gazing at Wren's masterpiece from your room will leave you breathless. Design demon Tom Dixon has bedecked this Seventies landmark with balconies so you can lean out and get closer. There's also a giant glass cube of a rooftop bar called the, ahem, Rumpus Room and the hot-ticket Sea Containers restaurant, where Seamus Mullen creates delights such as charred eggplant with yogurt, dates and sesame. Head down to the spa for a Custom Guru massage or hide away in the screening room. Then it's back to your 'cabin' with its ocean-liner curves and THAT eyeful. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £195 (MORGANSHOTELGROUP.COM; 0808 234 9523).



ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM GALE

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RIPPING YARNS

Hotspots with a tale to tell

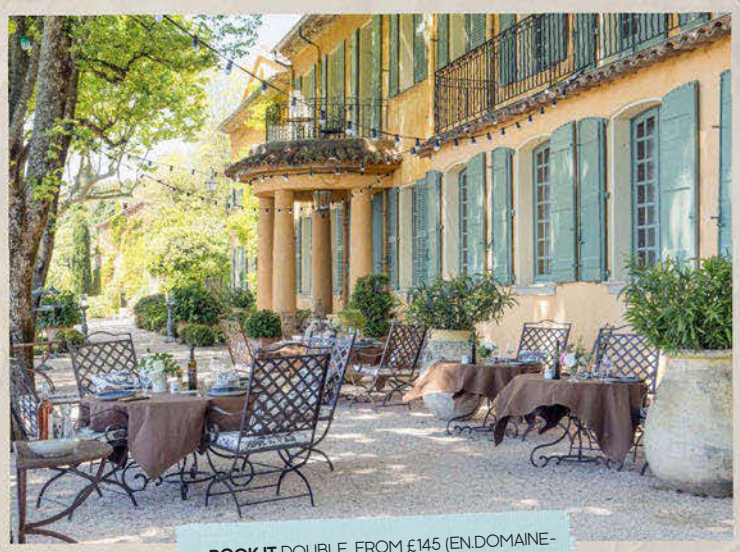
MUSTANG MONUMENT

NEVADA, USA

We love horses. And we love a heartwarming backstory. Which means we ADORE this brand-new slice of souped-up Nevada wilderness. It's the brainchild of the marvellously glamorous Madeleine Pickens. On hearing of the rapid depletion of the wild Mustang horses (ranchers want the land for cattle grazing), she threw herself into providing a safe haven for them, and creating the ultimate Wild West adventure for us. It's vast – more than 900 square miles of wide-open desert and pink mountains – and home to 600 rescue horses running wild, free and safe. All profits are ploughed back into saving the Mustangs – an arrangement we also love. What else? We love the early-morning horse-drawn wagon rides, loaded with hay bales to feed 'the wilds': beautiful, untamed, skittish, but happy to let you wander quietly among them as they graze. We love the hearty rides into the mountains, past spookily deserted 19th-century goldmines, for lunch at 9,500 feet. And we love the hair-raising off-road expeditions with Monty, an ex-US Navy Seal. Come sundown, there are cocktails in the magnificent saloon and impromptu whip-cracking lessons with Clay, an actual Nevada rodeo star who is also very gorgeous (we love him too, obvs), followed by a communal teepee supper. And then, pooped from all that desert air and big-hearted horsiness, off to your teepee or log cabin you trot, to wallow in the ultimate Ralph Lauren fantasy: distressed-leather armchairs, Native American carpets, vast freestanding baths, lanterns and chunky scatter cushions galore. And the teepees have a gap in the top to watch the stars from your bed (zero light pollution here). We. Love.

TATLER AWARD WINNER
INTO THE WILD

BOOK IT STEPPES TRAVEL (STEPPESTRAVEL.COM; 01285 880980) OFFERS FIVE NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £2,545, INCLUDING FLIGHTS, ALL ACTIVITIES AND TRANSFERS.



BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £145 (EN.DOMAINE-DELABAUME.COM; 00 33 4 57 74 74 74).

DOMAINE DE LA BAUME

PROVENCE, FRANCE

Yes, you could just loll about this charming Provençal house, scoffing *jambon* and drinking absurd amounts of rosé on the terrace. But dig deeper. Because this olive-shuttered, ochre-walled hotel once housed a proper artist, Bernard Buffet, between 1986 and 1999. OK, so his work was a tad melancholy – hence there aren't any of his actual paintings on the walls, but there are still nods to Buffet everywhere. Such as the 15 rooms, named after his most prominent works – our favourite is the saffron-coloured L'Abeille, which overlooks the lavender-tufted gardens. His studio has been transformed into guest rooms too, with chandeliers suspended from beams and walls upholstered in silk (look closely and you'll spot original splodges of oil paint in an untouched corridor). Leave time for a stomp around the grounds: 40 hectares of olive groves, waterfalls and hidden caves, where you'll find a tiny chapel and sculptures by local artists hidden among the cypress trees.

THE LOWELL

NEW YORK, USA

We've always cherished the Lowell. It's our ultimate low-key retreat from the most keyed up of cities. It is Upper East Side to a T, like the very smartest of Manhattan apartment buildings, tucked discreetly, ever so subtly, on a tree-lined street just off Madison Avenue. Inside is just as classy, just as un-showoffy, cosy even, with real log fires (and a fireplace menu, from Cedarwood to Rosemary). And now there are the opulent new two-bedroom suites, designed by the supersonic Michael S Smith, who revamped the White House (if it's good enough for the leader of the free world...). There are luscious silk curtains and hardwood floors and Oriental rugs. There are terraces to stride out onto and deep velvet sofas to sink into with a glass of something warming. They are regal; they are presidential. This is where you stay when you have nothing left to prove.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £490 (LOWELLHOTEL.COM; 001 212 838 1400).

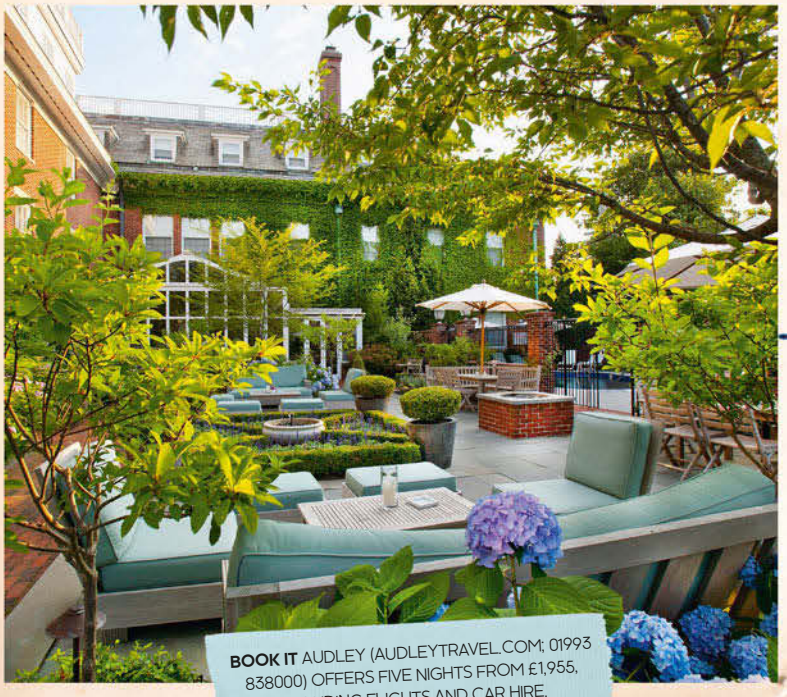
TATLER OFFER

SAVE UP TO £965 PER COUPLE. FOUR NIGHTS FOR THE PRICE OF THREE, FROM £1,395, INCLUDING BREAKFAST AND FLIGHTS. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK/TATLER; 0161 826 2866).*

HOTEL CIPRIANI VENICE, ITALY

The Cipriani is as close as you'll get to old-school Hollywood glamour this side of the Atlantic. Built in 1958 by Giuseppe Cipriani (the clever chap behind that other Venetian institution, Harry's Bar), it's always been the No. 1 choice for royals and A-listers. So don't be surprised if you spot Joan Collins sipping cocktails by the Olympic-sized pool. Or George Clooney swapping jokes with the completely charming head bartender, Walter Bolzonella. Or Faye Dunaway tucking into the thinnest carpaccio you've ever seen (a dish invented by Mr Cipriani himself, FYI) on the waterside terrace at Cip's Club. But don't stand around gawping – it's really not the done thing. Instead, lounge around in your palatial, marble-floored room. Or zip across to St Mark's Square on the hotel's private speedboat. Or pop to the Casanova spa in the rose garden, so named because these were the very gardens where Casanova wooed his many, many lovers. Phwoar. ▷

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY



BOOK IT AUDLEY (AUDLEYTRAVEL.COM; 01993 838000) OFFERS FIVE NIGHTS FROM £1,955, INCLUDING FLIGHTS AND CAR HIRE.

THE VANDERBILT GRACE

NEWPORT, USA

'Make your stay unique,' says the email that arrives right after you book at the Vanderbilt Grace, inviting you to 'personalise your stay'. Soap on a rope for the shower, maybe? Peanut butter and banana frozen yogurt on ice? Yes – but those are just for your pooch. So before you even draw up at this carefully restored, 1909 (dog-friendly) Newport mansion, and Marina Aslanidou, the lovely manager, has greeted you on the steps and thrust a glass of Billecart-Salmon champagne into your hand, you know you're in for a rollicking good time. The 33 rooms (including the vast first-floor suites) are the last word in understated New England chic, the terrace garden is a bloomin' joy and the food in the posh-option restaurant Muse – try butter-poached lobster with paprika – is sublime. And then there's Newport itself waiting outside. From the supersized gin palaces and America's Cup competition yachts in the harbour, to the shops on Thames Street selling nothing you need but everything you want, to the Gilded Age mansions that line the waterfront – this is the smartest town in the American North-East by miles. And the Grace is its best address. ▷

The bag that has it all. This leather travel trolley, £4,530, by Gucci not only looks glamorously old-school, it has wheels and a tug-me-along pull-out handle too. Your ride has been well and truly pimped. net-a-porter.com

LOEWS REGENCY

NEW YORK, USA

Midtown is back. And nowhere more so than at the Loews Regency, 51 years young after a facelift in which the windows alone cost a cool five million bucks. The new Loews is oh-so Park Avenue: acres of soft white marble in the lobby, and Larry King in the redesigned Regency Bar & Grill – lobster salad followed by Dover sole is his default lunch. This is where the term 'power breakfast' was coined 40 years ago, and it's still the place to chow down while brokering a mega-deal. Actually, it's all still quite men-in-suits orientated – the male spa alone takes up an entire floor. But ladies are hardly forgotten: the wardrobes in even the most modest of the 379 gorgeous rooms (all large by New York standards) are as big as aircraft hangars. No more unruly hair either: the Julien Farel professional-grade hairdryer in the bathroom could power a small country, and if breakfast isn't your thing, skip it for the salon's 'power hour' – a blowdry, manicure and pedicure, all finished in 60 minutes flat.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £335 (LOEWSHOTELS.COM; 001 212 759 4100).

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

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BELMOND VILLA SANT'ANDREA

TAORMINA, SICILY

Say what you like about the Victorians, but they knew how to enjoy themselves – when they were abroad, anyway. This grand old lady was built in 1830 as a private seaside villa for Cornish engineer Robert Trewhella. When not constructing railways across Italy, he was relaxing in the Sicilian sun, probably congratulating himself on his excellent life choices. His son did the right thing by the rest of us, and converted this bright, airy beauty on the Bay of Mazzarò into a hotel, now owned by the Belmond group. Light is everywhere: it fills the 65 rooms, bathes the Sicilian marble floors, reflects off the Murano glass and catches the loud ceramics from Caltagirone, the aquamarine blues and citrus yellows a perfect serenade to the island's colours. Sit on the private shingle beach, the sea at your toes, and lunch on agnolotti pasta with burrata and zingy lemon granita. Then drift off to your balcony overlooking the sea – to drink a glass of icy-cold white wine from the slopes of neighbouring Mount Etna and bask in the midday sun, as only a mad Englishman would. ▷

BOOK IT ABERCROMBIE & KENT (ABERCROMBIEKENT.CO.UK; 0845 482 0744) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS FROM £795, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

FANCY A BIT OF OLD-SCHOOL MARLENE D GLAM? **HOTEL ZOO** IN BERLIN HAS REOPENED ITS DOORS AFTER TWO YEARS OF RESTORATION. A FORMER HAUNT OF GRACE KELLY AND SOPHIA LOREN, IT HAS UPPED THE STYLE STAKES WITH EXPOSED BRICKS, HIGH CEILINGS AND LOTS OF GLOSS. (HOTELZOO.DE)

THE CONNAUGHT

LONDON, ENGLAND

The Connaught has been around forever – well, since 1815, to be precise, although it was known as the Prince of Saxe-Coburg Hotel back then, a name that didn't exactly trip off the tongue. Which is probably why those in the know called it the the Coburg. It was renamed during the First World War – after Queen Victoria's seventh child, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn. And the movers and the makers poured through its doors, from Charles de Gaulle, who apparently stayed here when planning the D-Day landings with Allied commanders, to the Queen Mother, who was partial to a spot of Michel Bourdin's cooking. Ralph Lauren loved the grand wooden staircase so much that he had it copied and installed in his Manhattan flagship. So it has pedigree and history, but also buckets of style – from the silvery, high-ceilinged art-deco beauty of the Apartment Suite, to the sexy hide-away-in bar; from the Michelin-starred marvels of Hélène Darroze to the mind-blowing massages of the Aman Spa. And the butlers: clever, on-the-ball, never obsequious but as good as telepathic. It's a win-win package – long may it last.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £425 (THE-CONNAUGHT.CO.UK; 020 7499 7070).

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

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CAPE WELIGAMA

WELIGAMA, SRI LANKA

We do enjoy a nice cup of tea. And we've found the perfect spot for a brew: the breezy open-plan restaurant at brand new Cape Weligama. While you're there, cast your eyes over the little spice and vegetable market just outside – a daily occurrence and a nice nod to local culture, thanks to the family owners. They made their fortune from the humble tea leaf, turning their green-fingered hands to hotels and the Resplendent Ceylon portfolio. Their newest, boldest number is on a rocky promontory on the south-west coast of Sri Lanka, flanked by arcs of wild Indian Ocean beach (surfers love it here). The centrepiece is a remarkable crescent-moon infinity pool set into the clifftops, but there's isn't just one pool – hell no, there are 13 dotted around the villas. It's all about inside-out living: wide terraces to lounge on, sliding louvred doors to let in the sea breeze. You can snooze in your *watta* (walled garden), zone out with an orange and sandalwood massage, kayak on Koggala Lake, brave the waves for a surf or scuba lesson, or zip over to Galle Fort for a tour. You'll be knackered after all that. Time for a nice cup of tea.

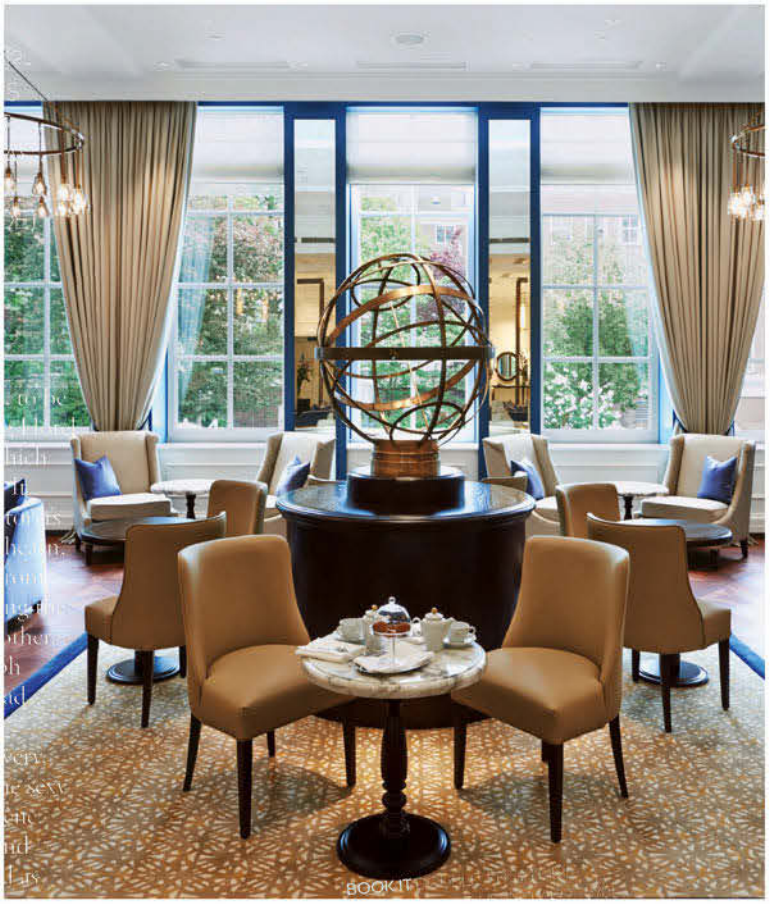
WE'RE PARTIAL TO A POLISHED-UP PALACE, SO OUR EARS PRICKED UP WHEN WE HEARD THAT ONE OF JAIPUR'S OLDEST WAS GETTING A SPRUCE. **SUJAN RAJMAHAL PALACE** HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A BOUTIQUE 15-SUITE HOTEL, PACKED WITH PROPER MAHARAJA-STYLE PUNCH (SUJANLUXURY.COM)

WALDORF ASTORIA AMSTERDAM

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

Standing proud over Amsterdam's chic Herengracht (Gentlemen's Canal), the Waldorf Astoria carries itself like an aristocrat with impeccable manners – and a wardrobe to match. It was created from six of the city's grandest old waterfront palaces, and its construction involved the careful welding together of noble houses on a scale worthy of the deftest medieval diplomat. The result is very smart indeed, with lavish interiors that make the most of its original 17th-century flourishes (we do like a flourish). So there are marble fireplaces and vast sash windows, herringbone-parquet floors and lots of dashes of cool Delft blue. The Guerlain Spa is the first in the region. The restaurant, Librije's Zusje, is an offshoot of the renowned three-Michelin-starred De Librije – sit down in one of the velvet chairs and tuck into langoustines with pineapple piccalilli and roasted veal sweetbreads. And the Vault Bar is hip as anything. The name is a throwback to when one of the buildings was a bank – the cocktail ingredients are stashed in safety deposit boxes and are whipped out for creations such as the Zwollywood: limoncello, Drambuie, champagne and lemon. And here's something really rare: private gardens, the largest of their kind in Amsterdam, a retreat of rose-fringed tranquillity at the city's mercurial heart.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £395 (HILTON.COM; 00 31 20 718 4600).



PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK

BELMOND HOTEL SPLENDIDO, PORTOFINO
WHAT YOU SOON COME TO UNDERSTAND IS HOW DIFFERENT EVERYTHING FEELS FROM THE WATER. LUCA FROM THE HOTEL SAYS WITH ALL HIS HEART, "THERE ARE PLACES THAT ONCE YOU SEE THEM, THEY CHANGE YOU." SO YOU ASK, "WHERE WOULD YOU TAKE SOMEONE SPECIAL?" HE STUDIES YOU FOR A MOMENT BEFORE GIVING AWAY HIS SECRET. THEN HE SKETCHES A SIMPLE MAP AND MAKES YOU PROMISE TO TELL NO ONE. LATER YOU SWIM AT HIS SECRET BEACH, THEN REST ON THE DECK OF THE GOZZO WHILE THE SUN WARMS YOU. YOU THINK, "I WILL KEEP THIS WITH ME FOREVER."
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USA, Santa Barbara, **Belmond El Encanto**
USA, St Michaels, **Inn at Perry Cabin by Belmond**

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Brazil, Iguassu Falls, **Belmond Hotel das Cataratas**
Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, **Belmond Copacabana Palace**
Peru, Cusco, **Belmond Hotel Monasterio**
Peru, Cusco, **Belmond Palacio Nazarenas**
Peru, Lima, **Belmond Miraflores Park**
Peru, Machu Picchu, **Belmond Hiram Bingham** train
Peru, Machu Picchu, **Belmond Sanctuary Lodge**
Peru, Sacred Valley, **Belmond Hotel Rio Sagrado**

EUROPE

Europe, **Venice Simplon-Orient-Express** train
France, Burgundy, **Belmond Afloat in France** river cruises
Ireland, **Belmond Grand Hibernian** train (2016)
Italy, Amalfi Coast, **Belmond Hotel Caruso**
Italy, Florence, **Belmond Villa San Michele**
Italy, Portofino, **Belmond Hotel Splendido**
Italy, Portofino, **Belmond Splendido Mare**
Italy, Taormina, **Belmond Grand Hotel Timeo**
Italy, Taormina Mare, **Belmond Villa Sant'Andrea**
Italy, Venice, **Belmond Hotel Cipriani**
Portugal, Madeira, **Belmond Reid's Palace**
Russia, St Petersburg, **Belmond Grand Hotel Europe**
Spain, Madrid, **Hotel Ritz by Belmond**
Spain, Mallorca, **Belmond La Residencia**
UK departures, **Belmond Northern Belle** train
UK, Edinburgh, **Belmond Royal Scotsman** train
UK, London, **Belmond British Pullman** train
UK, London, **Belmond Cadogan Hotel** (2016)
UK, Oxfordshire, **Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons**

AFRICA

Botswana, Chobe National Park, **Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge**
Botswana, Moremi Reserve, **Belmond Khwai River Lodge**
Botswana, Okavango Delta, **Belmond Eagle Island Lodge**
South Africa, Cape Town, **Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel**

ASIA

Cambodia, Siem Reap, **Belmond La Résidence d'Angkor**
Indonesia, Bali, **Belmond Jimbaran Puri**
Laos, Luang Prabang, **Belmond La Résidence Phou Vao**
Myanmar, **Belmond Orcaella** river cruises
Myanmar, **Belmond Road to Mandalay** river cruises
Myanmar, Yangon, **Belmond Governor's Residence**
Thailand, Koh Samui, **Belmond Napasai**
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ATOLL BE THE DAY

Warning: these exquisite island resorts are strictly for those who can handle extreme luxury

The Maldives is currently the scene of a slightly undignified luxury arms race. As one island resort opens boasting the world's finest beach, another raises the bar with an Olympic-level kids' club and jaw-dropping wine cellar. A third matches the beach, the kids' club and the cellar, and ups the stakes further with a 13-course tasting menu. The tireless foot soldiers in this war are the battalions of personal butlers for whom, day or night, literally nothing, madam, is too much trouble. This may not come easily to the English visitor. We know that we shouldn't be demanding, it's vulgar to be indulged and there is something intrinsically wicked about wallowing, hippo-like, in luxury. Oh well. Once you've taken the nanosecond of soul-searching you need to get over that, you'll love it...

VELAA PRIVATE ISLAND NOONU ATOLL

Many yearn for a total absence of stimulation while on holiday. Which can be alarming for those dismayed by inactivity. If one type happens to be married to the other, grief can ensue. This is why we love Velaa so very much. Velaa is perfect for mismatched couples: the sloth can check into the spa or stare, slack-jawed, at the gin-clear sea as it licks at the silky white sand. In the Clarins spa, each treatment room is an individual over-water villa and the range of therapies is exhaustive – there's even a snow room. The action junkie, meanwhile, can get busy: with a climbing wall, yoga pavilion, eight-hole golf course, squash and volleyball courts, shady outdoor tennis court, turtle hatchery with resident marine biologist and all the watersports and toys you'd ever want.

At the end of the day, said mismatched couple can meet at any of the four restaurants to sit companionably, mute with exhaustion/massage-induced numbness. One restaurant is atop the tallest structure in a Maldives resort, a 70ft-high tower which houses an extensive wine cellar. Another sits alone in a giant water villa, its ceiling hung with hundreds of ceramic flying fish. It is the most beautiful place you could ever, ever eat.

And the 'Romantic Pool Residence' is the most beautiful place you could ever, ever sleep. It is only accessible by boat. It has its own beach, pool, jacuzzi, spa, over-water dining room, kitchen and dressing room. And its own regularly visiting dolphins. And – AND – a tiny bedroom for your butler (or bodyguard).

Almost the most important thing about Velaa is that, although it has a golf course and a fantastically show-offy (oxymoronic) wine cellar, it isn't vulgar. Hard to believe. But then again, so was the snow room. ▷

BOOK IT CAZENOVE+LOYD (CAZLOYD.COM; 020 7381 2332) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £5,770, INCLUDING BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND BREAKFAST.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

CHEVAL BLANC RANDHELI NOONU ATOLL

At Cheval Blanc, the architecture is epic. The effect, as you enter your cathedral-sized villa (with pillars that reveal themselves to be sails, which in turn pivot to become walls), is one of 'this holiday may have cost more than a term's fees at Eton but, damn, I'm getting a lot of bang for my buck'. Thanks to William and Kate's visit, this is the most famous of the new openings in the Maldives, and *everything* is epic. The watersports and restaurants are epic. The kids' club is epic. There is the epic Paddock, a brilliant teen holding area with a billiard table, Wii, PlayStation, table football and everything else the ungrateful little sods would rather be doing than hanging out with their parents. And just when you've got used to the ludicrous perfection of it all, you sail in a dhoni to the spa island and your brain melts again. For here it is, actual (epic) heaven. A palm-tree-dotted, perfect, tiny island sprinkled with treatment rooms – or, more accurately, treatment villas – each with beach and sea views. At the spa bar, the 'light lunch' consists of beef carpaccio with parmesan, lobster spring rolls and roast chicken. The food at the other four restaurants is monumental – from the gourmand eight-course tasting menu at 1947 (named after the greatest vintage of Cheval Blanc) to the delicious Spanish or Japanese menus at the Diptyque, and even at the breakfast buffet with an ever-changing array of extraordinary banana bread, chocolate muffins, a variety of doughnuts, almond croissants, pains au chocolat... these chefs are insane. Or, indeed, epic.

BOOK IT CAZENOVE+LOYD (CAZLOYD.COM; 020 7381 2332) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £8,938, INCLUDING BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND BREAKFAST.

WELL HELLO, **AMILLA FUSHI**, THE LEAFIEST ADDITION TO THE MALDIVES CLIQUE. STAY AMONG THE TREES AND DINE AT AUSSIE CELEB CHEF LUKE MANGAN'S RESTAURANT (GORDON WHO?). WE'VE HEARD THE SPA IS PRETTY BANGING TOO. (AMILLAFUSHI MALDIVES.COM)

MAALIFUSHI BY COMO THAA ATOLL

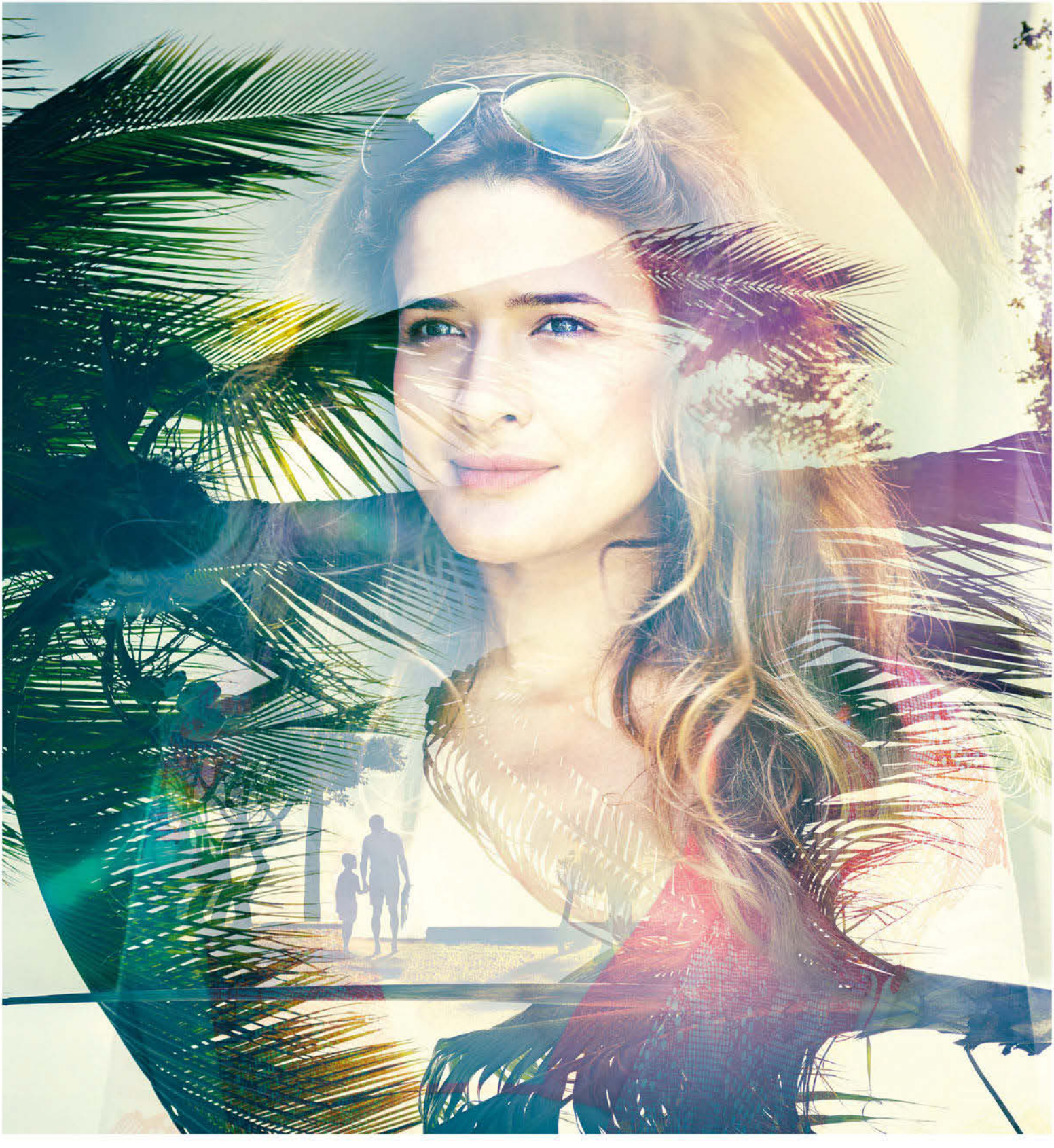
At Maalifushi, it's very easy to become blasé about the constant bombardment of paradise perfection. The crimson sun bursting into view over the Indian Ocean at precisely 05.56. The 33 over-water villas, each with effortlessly cool decor and soaring ceilings and its own infinity pool to rest your chin on the edge of and stare, dumbfounded, at the sea. Or the Shambhala Retreat, offering blissful, zingy Como treatments (the 60-minute signature massage is life-changing). And then there are the three restaurants and bars, with toes-in-the-sand lunches at Thila (lobster-mango salad) and Japanese feasts at Tai (wagyu beef with truffle salt and nashi pear). And there's snorkelling, amid baby sharks. Plus yacht trips, where you sip champagne and watch dolphins and pilot whales frolic in your wake. This is a resort where you must kick off your shoes, kick back and surrender.

TATLER OFFER

SAVE £960 PER COUPLE. SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £3,200, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS, A COUPLES' SPA TREATMENT AND ONE LUNCH. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK/TATLER; 0161 826 2866).*

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

*LIGHTER. BRIGHTER.



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Wild at Heart

Africa Travel creates adventures as diverse as Africa itself – experiences that capture the spirit of this vast continent. Run with the right pack

Africa with its rolling plains and pink sunsets, its galloping wildebeest and dramatic coastlines, demands a trip of magnitude and depth. There is so much to explore and so much to see. To get to grips with this awe-inspiring continent, you need the guidance of a specialist. With over 30 years' experience, Africa Travel has positioned itself as the UK's leading luxury tour operator for holidays in Africa. From Kenya to Botswana and Zimbabwe to Namibia, Africa Travel composes incredible itineraries based on first-hand knowledge and expertise. At the helm of Africa Travel is Frances Geoghegan. Frances has been visiting and selling Africa for many years, and over this time she has built strong relationships with staff at hotels, safari lodges and restaurants. These people help your holiday run smoothly and this insider knowledge can make all the difference.

South Africa is one of Africa Travel's leading destinations. The diversity of this country is simply breathtaking – choose from beachy breaks or roaming safaris. Luckily, Frances has hunted down the coolest spots, so you don't have to. There is a local office in Cape Town to offer extra support while you're on holiday. Experts there are primed to help you with every detail. They can point you in the direction of great restaurants like The Test Kitchen and even help you secure a table. They know the best shops (like Merchants on Long Boutique), the best safaris and the best bars. Their unrivalled knowledge delivers epic trips, time and again. Answer the call of the wild...

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SOUTH AFRICA OR BEYOND, call 020 7843 3580 or visit africatravel.com

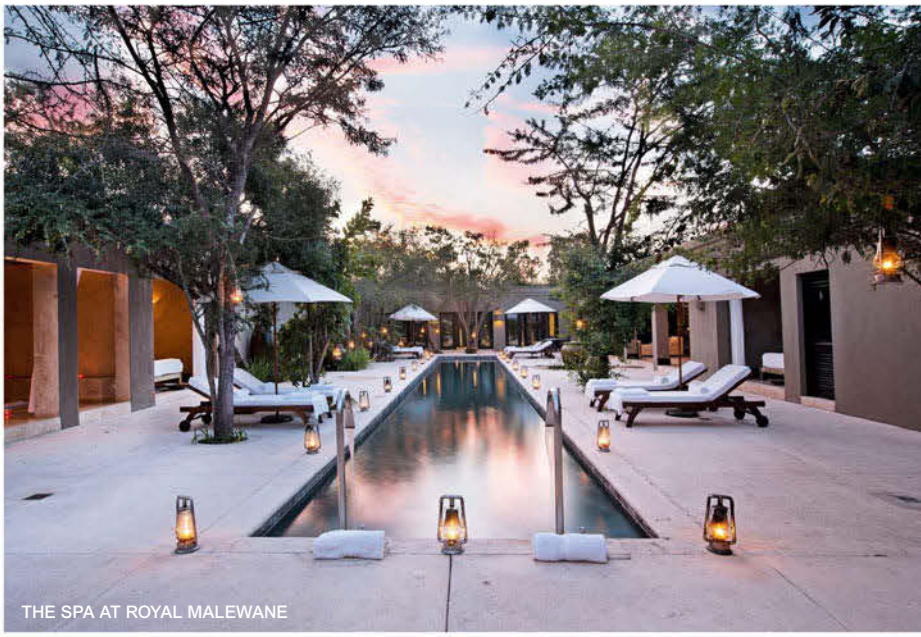
BIRKENHEAD HOUSE

BIRKENHEAD HOUSE, SOUTH AFRICA

Ocean stretching out as far as the eye can see. The hypnotic sound of waves crashing on the rocks below. Birkenhead House clings to a cliff top overlooking the whale-watching vantage point, Walker Bay in Hermanus, and provides awe-inspiring, wind-blown views. The hotel has a chic yet relaxed, beach-house vibe – think luxurious surfer. Guests are encouraged to take to the waves themselves, with surfing lessons on offer. Explore the coastline by boat for a chance to see 'ocean theatre' – whales, dolphins and sharks in their natural habitat. If you're feeling less energetic, you can take in the dramatic scenery from the hotel's plunge pool or wander down to the unspoilt white sandy beaches. Hermanus is just over an hour's drive from Cape Town so you can combine oceanic tranquility with more active urban pursuits.

ROYAL MALEWANE, SOUTH AFRICA

Royal Malewane Safari Lodge brings you into nature while retaining all the cossetting features of modern luxury. It is situated in the heart of Africa's finest bushveld, on a private game reserve adjacent to the Kruger National Park. An unparalleled guiding and tracking team will bring you hair-raisingly close to the Big Five. See elephants roaming in their natural environment, lions dozing in the heat of the bushveld sun. The guides will give you an insight into this unique ecosystem – enhancing the safari experience with their expertise. Later, you can cool down and unwind in the hotel's award-winning spa. Treat tired muscles in the hot and cold African baths or take a languid dip in the calming, heated pool. There's nothing quite like an outdoorsy adventure to build up an appetite. The game lodge provides an array of indoor and outdoor dining experiences. Enjoy flame-grilled fare amidst the buzz of crickets and melodic birdsong, while observing the animals at the nearby watering hole. Also offering a full kosher menu, the restaurant provides incredible feasts in beautiful surroundings.


THE SPA AT ROYAL MALEWANE

LA RESIDENCE

LA RESIDENCE, SOUTH AFRICA

Nestled deep in the beautiful Franschhoek valley – the culinary capital of South Africa – is La Residence, an oasis in the wilderness. Tempering rural charm with unadulterated opulence (marble floors, free standing baths, glistening chandeliers), this hotel delivers luxury with character. Surrounded by vineyards and plum orchards on a 30-acre estate and set against the backdrop of mountains, La Residence is the perfect launch pad from which to explore the region. There is a range of wine-tasting options available. Savour the olive oil and wines produced by the hotel or summon your adventurous spirit by taking a helicopter ride to explore vineyards further afield. Recuperate after a day of activities with a private pampering treatment in your room (try a facial or a massage) or simply recline by the pool. You'll soak up the sun (and the magnificent view).

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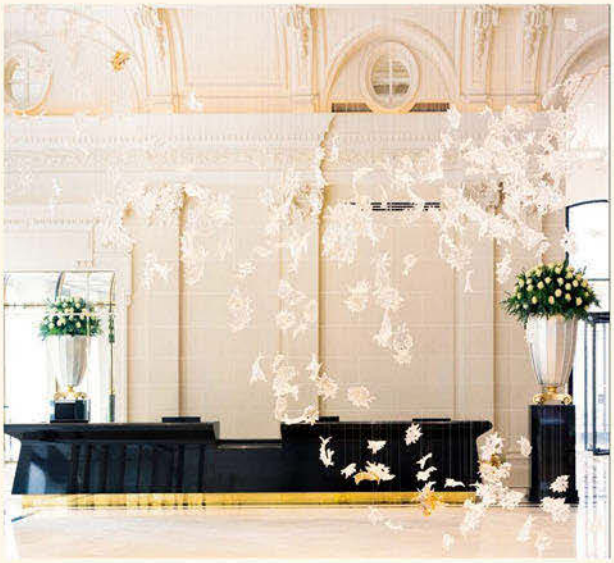

THE PENINSULA PARIS

If there's one era that defines Paris, it's the Jazz Age: Coco Chanel was reinventing fashion; the Fitzgeralds were holding court; Ernest Hemingway and Josephine Baker were the toast of the town. And it's when one of history's most famous dinner parties took place: in 1922, when socialites Sydney and Violet Schiff brought together Marcel Proust and James Joyce for the first (and last) time, at the Hotel Majestic. The hotel had quite the scene at the time; it's also where Gershwin penned *An American in Paris*. Then it all stopped: the Majestic became a government building and all that magical fairy dust vanished. Until now. The Peninsula group has spent the past four years polishing and gilding and restoring, with thrilling results. The lobby is a thing of wonder: a clip-cloppy marble floor with crystal leaves sparkling overhead; the Lobby restaurant has a ceiling painted by a Versailles restorer; L'Oiseau Blanc restaurant has the city's best view of the Eiffel Tower. Beneath it all is a sultry pool and ESPA spa. Bedrooms are less exciting – but who cares? You're here to sit on the roof terrace with a gin fizz, stare out over the city and try to recapture a bit of that fairy dust. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £870 (PARIS.PENINSULA.COM; 00 33 1 58 12 28 88).

HOTEL VERNET

The Vernet's 100th-birthday present to itself was a much-deserved overhaul at the skilful hands of art-mad interior designer François Champsaur. The hotel's Haussmann-era charms have been retained: marble floors, spiralling staircase and the restaurant's stained-glass, domed ceiling designed by Gustave Eiffel, whose masterwork is a quick skip around the corner. But things have been spruced and spiffed up and given a modern lick too, with contemporary art on the walls (and the ceilings and the carpets). Bedrooms have Brancusi-esque, curved copper light fittings, pale-oak floors and throws made by French artisans. The beds are huge (you will lose your other half in the middle of the night) and the food is exceptional. The carnaroli risotto with squid ink and parmesan is worth the trip on the Eurostar alone. No exaggeration. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £200 (HOTELVERNET-PARIS.COM; 00 33 1 44 31 98 00).

MON DIEU, IT TOOK ITS SWEET TIME! AFTER FIVE TURBULENT YEARS AND £41M, THE PICASSO MUSEUM HAS REOPENED IN THE MARAIS. IT REALLY WAS WORTH THE WAIT – IT'S THREE TIMES BIGGER AND IS NOW HOME TO MORE THAN 5,000 WORKS OF ART. (MUSEEPICASSOPARIS.FR)

MOLITOR

Pop quiz! Who inaugurated the art-deco Molitor pool in 1929? No? Nothing? Tarzan, that's who! In fact it was Olympic swimming champion Johnny Weissmuller, who worked here as a lifeguard and went on to Hollywood stardom as the loinclothed one. More fun facts: the world's first bikini was launched here in 1946. It was modelled by Micheline Bernardini, a nude dancer from the Casino de Paris revue, as it was deemed far too scandalous for the fashion models of the day. The Molitor closed and fell into decay in the Nineties, but now it's reopened as a chic hotel and private sports club, with two pools, oodles of period details and après-swim bravura. There are spacious sunbathing decks, a huge Clarins spa, vintage photos of bathing beauties and big cream-and-wood bedrooms that look out onto that pool. And, atop it all, a spectacular, verdant, rooftop bar and barbecue, with treetop-like views over the Parisian urban jungle. Get ready to beat your chest with glee. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £165 (MLTR.FR; 00 33 1 56 07 08 50).

EUROSTAR (EUROSTAR.COM) OPERATES UP TO 18 DAILY SERVICES FROM LONDON ST PANCRAS INTERNATIONAL TO PARIS, WITH RETURN FARES FROM £69. JOURNEY TIME IS 2HR 15MINS.

LE BRISTOL

We love, love, love Le Bristol. Why? Well... because there are magnolia trees in the garden, enormous suites with terraces, the sort of dining room where it would look just plain weird if they didn't have a grand piano (so, of course, they do), a La Prairie spa, a Russian wet room and two resident fluffy white Birman cats, Fa-Raon and Kléopatre. Because the smiley staff remember whether you prefer your café au lait or black, the restaurants have so many Michelin stars we've lost count, there's a brilliant club for the kids, potent cocktails to be sipped beside a frescoed mural in the bar and a swimming pool that opens onto a sun deck overlooking *tout* Paris. But what we love most about this staggeringly sumptuous hotel is that we are always welcomed like old friends and never want to leave. EVER. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £715 (LEBRISTOLPARIS.COM; 00 33 1 53 43 43).

FOUR TO WATCH

LE CINQ CODET

This just-opened hotel is a slick addition to the very grand 7th arrondissement. Many of the 67 rooms in the curvaceous Thirties telephone exchange are duplexes, some with roof terraces. Add a retro-looking lounge bar, original artworks and Sputnik-like lighting fittings and you've got what feels like your own pied-à-terre. *le5codet.com*

RITZ PARIS

Affectionately named '*ma maison*' by Coco Chanel, the Ritz Paris will reopen its grandiose doors in late 2015 after a three-year overhaul. The grande dame's timeworn soul has been preserved but she's got a fresher vibe: roomy suites, heaps of glass and a glossy new *jardin*. It's still the Ritz – but with a cheeky nip and tuck. *ritzparis.com*

LA RESERVE PARIS

If palatial pomp isn't your thing, then La Réserve Hotel & Spa most probably is. It's housed in a Haussmann-style mansion close to the Champs-Elysées, and the atmosphere is clubby elegance, with cosy nooks, plummy purple tones and lashings of dark, chocolatey wood. Yummy. The 40 rooms and suites are soft and creamy with stonkingly good views of Le Grand Palais and the Eiffel Tower. *lareserve-paris.com*

HOTEL DE CRILLON

This hotel is a total lege. Flanking Place de la Concorde, the building has witnessed *everything*, including the French Revolution and the execution of Marie Antoinette, who used to play piano in the first-floor salon. All this history has taken its toll and a much-needed spit 'n' polish is being applied, including a sparkly new spa and two Karl Lagerfeld-designed suites. *crillon.com*

ILLUSTRATIONS: PATRICK MORGAN AT DEBUT ART. PHOTOGRAPHS: GILLES TRILLARD, ROMEO BALANCOURT

BEACHY KEEN

Fly. Flop. Feel happy

MANDARIN ORIENTAL BODRUM BODRUM, TURKEY

The traditional port of Bodrum is known for its rustic charm and rugged coastal beauty. Oh, but hang on! It's gone all sophisticated! The moneyed set are descending in droves, and the Mandarin Oriental's first European resort is merrily playing its part. It's big on choice. There are five restaurants and three bars with everything from Italian to Turkish food – you're bound to lose whoever you're holidaying with before breakfast (or even during breakfast; the buffet is VAST). There are two private, pristine beaches with their own jetties. There are balconies and terraces and pools, all with views of the sparkling Aegean. The spa is colossal, with a VIP treatment suite bigger than a Park Lane penthouse and a treatment list as long as your leg. You'll even have a choice of therapist, or waiter – staff outnumber guests five to one. Decor is slick, dark and expensive-looking – this place oozes rich. Don't wear denim cut-offs. You will not fit in.

BOOK IT KIRKER HOLIDAYS (KIRKERHOLIDAYS.COM; 020 7593 2283) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS FROM £1,800, INCLUDING TURKISH AIRLINES FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND BREAKFAST.

THE BRAINS BEHIND THE GROUCHO CLUB ARE MAKING WAVES ON THE DORSET COAST. **THE SEASIDE BOARDING HOUSE** IS A VICTORIAN CLIFFTOP VILLA THAT'S REALLY A RESTAURANT WITH ROOMS. AND MARK HIX ON THE BOARD OF ADVISERS. YUM. (THESEASIDEBOARDINGHOUSE.COM)

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £300 (ANDAZ.HYATT.COM; 001 808 573 1234).

ANDAZ MAUI AT WAILEA

HAWAII, USA

Hawaii's first major opening in years pulls off a clever trick: it nods and winks and bows to local culture, but stops short at aloha overkill. So no *Magnum PI* shirts (or moustaches, for shame), but instead you'll find a soaring open-air lobby with a sandpit at its heart. And an undulating mahogany staircase inspired by a traditional outrigger canoe. There are fragrant tuberose leis, contemporary Hawaiian art and bath products from Kauai-based Malie in the breezy, minimalist rooms. At the apothecary-like Awili Spa, therapists smother you with local herbs and macadamia-nut oil – just the ticket before you collapse on the beach or by one of the sinuous infinity pools, a glass of white peach and rum in hand. This is big-resort central, but the Andaz does it with low-key, laidback flair. We'll say aloha to that...

THE SANCHAYA BINTAN, INDONESIA

Some people refer to this island as the Hamptons of Singapore, but we prefer to think of it as the fairytale jewel of the Indonesian coast, complete with frolicking dolphins and water so sparkly it'll make your eyes hurt. The first resort to open on quiet Bintan for more than 10 years, this colonial gem has lots of fabulously old-fashioned touches, like British Butler Institute-trained staff and custom-made china that's nicer than the Queen's. Wake up in one of 21 villas decked out in delicious dark wood and spend your days lazing round the pool, ordering snacks from the Tasanee Grill's selection of devilishly good Bangkok street food. After that it's a quick glass of Pimm's and a game of croquet, before you head to the dining room to sit down to roast lamb and peas for supper.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £670 (THESANCHAYA.COM; 00 62 770 692200).

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

THE TASTE OF THE SEA

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VA-VA-VIEWS

What an eyeful: blistering vistas and eye-popping panoramas

AWASI PATAGONIA

TORRES DEL PAINE, CHILE

Part of the prep for a Patagonia trip is getting your head around the fact that you're about to be outnumbered by sheep. And guanacos (skinny llamas). But where there are sheep, there are gauchos – and these windswept pampas churn out the very highest calibre of dashing, beret-wearing horsemen. For mindblowing views over Chile's fabulous Torres del Paine National Park (and sheep and guanacos and gauchos), Awasi is the place to be. You'll have your very own lodge – there are 12, all modern masterpieces fashioned from local lenga wood, with whacking great vistas over the wilderness on your doorstep – plus your very own guide and your very own 4WD. Everything is tailor-made. Fancy rolling out of bed at 11am, going for a gentle bike ride and having a boozy picnic lunch? No problemo. Want to rise before the sun for some hardcore hiking to the Paine Massif, followed by a feast of guanaco steak? A-OK. You simply decide when you want glaciers and when you want gauchos.

BOOK IT JOURNEY LATIN AMERICA (JOURNEYLATINAMERICA.CO.UK; 020 8747 8315) OFFERS FIVE NIGHTS AS PART OF A SEVEN-NIGHT TRIP, FROM £4,380, INCLUDING FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

TOP SPOT SOAK UP THE VIEWS DURING A RELAXING WALLOW IN YOUR OWN PRIVATE HOT TUB, WITH A CALAFATE SOUR CLOSE TO HAND.

CAPE VIEW CLIFTON

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Every now and then you find a hotel that is so perfect, that does the whole 'hotel' thing so bloody well, that it sort of spoils all the others. Cape View is one of those. It's the consummate boutique hotel. It can do no wrong. From its views – high up above the white sands of Clifton Beach, with soul-stirring panoramas of the Twelve Apostles and the glittering Atlantic – to its rooms: bright, airy, white and grey and dove-wing silver and GORGEOUS, with cloud-like beds and massive bathrooms and balconies and more of those views. And its wide, wide terrace with pool, loungers and an honesty bar that has a dozen varieties of wine and the best darn lemon yogurt cake you've ever tasted. And its delightful GM, Tessa Ellis-Brown, who insists you treat the place as your own (and everyone does), and the delightful cook, who whips up a cheese and ham omelette to end all omelettes. It is charming, it is breathtaking and we wish we lived there, all the time. Other hotels: take note.

BOOK IT AFRICA TRAVEL (AFRICATRAVEL.COM; 020 7843 3580) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £1,920, INCLUDING BREAKFAST AND FLIGHTS.

TOP SPOT THE LEFT-HAND LOUNGER ON THE TERRACE AT SUNDOWN, ENJOYING A CHEEKY LITTLE CEDERBERG CHENIN BLANC.

PERCHED AT THE EDGE OF A PRETTY PROVENCAL VILLAGE, **LA BASTIDE DE GORDES** IS GETTING A MAKEOVER. WORD IS THAT THEY'RE BUYING 4,000 PAINTINGS FOR THE ROOMS, AND PIERRE GAGNAIRE WILL BE IN CHARGE OF THE KITCHENS. NOUS SOMMES EXCITED! (BASTIDE-DE-GORDES.COM)

LONGITUDE 131

YULARA, AUSTRALIA

Uluru is like a giant magical brain, hypnotising you with its red-hued sandstone gorgeousness into taking far, far too many photos *Instagram bore alert*. As visitors fell under its spell, so too did the clever chaps behind Baillie Lodges (owners of Kangaroo Island's Southern Ocean Lodge), who have now taken the reins of Longitude. The result is tickety-boo – an outback jewel that offers the very best camping experience (by which we mean it's not really camping at all). The futuristic tents on stilts have sharp, chic new interiors and jazzed-up menus (kingfish and a glass of chilled white wine under the stars gets a big tick from us). There are 15 tents, fanning out on either side of the Dune House restaurant and open bar, all with money shots across the ghostly desert oaks to Uluru.

BOOK IT BLACK TOMATO (BLACKTOMATO.COM; 020 7426 9888) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS, ALL INCLUSIVE, FROM £2,450, INCLUDING FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND EXTRA ACTIVITIES.

TOP SPOT
KATE AND WILLS BAGSIED THE LAST TENT IN THE ROW, WHICH HAS UNINTERRUPTED VIEWS OF THE SUNSET OVER ULURU, LAST APRIL. IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR THEM...

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

SIXTY SOHO

NEW YORK, USA

From its black street door to the check-in girl's black cocktail dress, to the black key card embossed 'Drifter's Escape', the newly renovated SIXTY SoHo is heavily monochrome. But take the elevator to the hotel's 12th-floor Above Sixty rooftop bar and you enter a different world – a world of colour! From here, high above Thompson Street and against a clear blue New York sky, you have an uninterrupted view of Manhattan's East Side, glinting in the near distance. And there's the added air of exclusivity: the bar is open only to hotel guests and private members. As for the rest of the hotel, it's hip, sure, but never at the expense of comfort – vast marble bathrooms, ice buckets always full, brownies left at turndown and more in-room snacks than a full-blown grocery store. A very cool SoHo address. ▷

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £340 (SIXTYHOTELS.COM; 001 877 431 0400).

TOP SPOT
TABLE EIGHT – FRAMED BY ITS OWN GREEN ARBOUR – IS THE ONE TO GRAB. THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, DIRECTLY OPPOSITE, HITS YOU SMACK BETWEEN THE EYES.

OK, they're smug, but we're still fans of a good selfie. So we love the £200 Nikon CoolPix S6900 camera (nikon.co.uk), with its flip-out screen and Glamour mode. Shame there's no smugness filter.

NIKKI BEACH

PORTO HELI, GREECE

Done Corfu? Bored of Mykonos? Porto Heli – weekend getaway of Greece's famous and fabulous – is where shipowners and It girls are getting their groove on now. How handy, then, to have this shiny new Nikki Beach number to bed down in. Sitting in a natural harbour in the eastern Peloponnese, this glittering revamp of a Seventies hotel has 66 hi-tech, spacious and, crucially, soundproofed rooms. Top party pads: the Ultra Suites, with their own rooftop jacuzzi. The all-white beach club has the usual sexy Nikki vibe, with a curvaceous sunken bar, leather pool beds and ESPA cabanas for tongue-in-cheek treatments such as the Hangover Remedy. The morning after the night before can be spent doing downward dog in the sand (with a yoga teacher) or escaping the glitz with a boat trip to a secluded cove – the rest of the Peloponnese is still as peaceful as ever.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £235 (NIKKIBEACHHOTELS.COM; 00 30 27540 98 500).

TOP SPOT THE PEARL ROOFTOP LOUNGE HAS ACE SUNSET VIEWS, SERIOUSLY GOOD SUSHI AND AMUSINGLY NAMED COCKTAILS – A HELI BERRY, ANYONE?

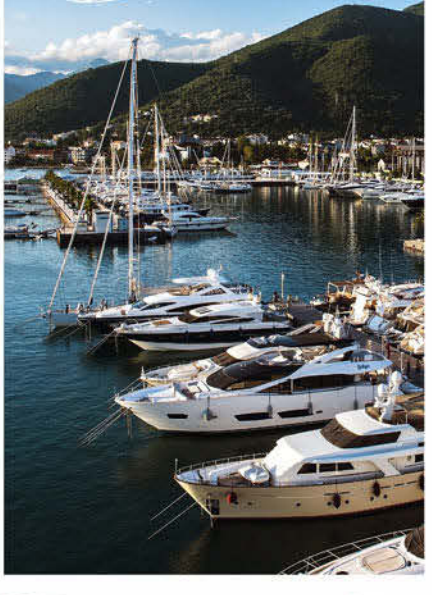
REGENT PORTO MONTENEGRO

PORTO MONTENEGRO VILLAGE, MONTENEGRO

Your balcony at the shiny new Regent doubles up as a ringside seat to the shiny new Porto Montenegro – you could just about reach out and tickle/punch those superyacht owners. The view is all yachts, the sparkly Adriatic and more yachts, and that nautical theme continues inside, with teak panelling and ropes slung around mirrors. Downstairs is boaty too: the bar has a gentleman's club vibe, and the terrace is the place to spend the day watching and scoffing. Breakfast includes the best scrambled eggs known to man (with truffle and parmesan). You might as well stay put for lunch, for lobster and zucchini millefeuille with feta and preserved lemon. And tea: out-of-this-world pastries. Then waddle to the spa or the infinity pool – or let the concierge summon a speedboat to whisk you to a private beach.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £195 (REGENTMONTENEGRO.COM; 00 382 32 660 660).

TOP SPOT THE ITALIAN GARDEN – ALL SUNKEN SEATING, WATER FEATURES AND TREES, JUST 10 PACES FROM THE SUPERYACHTS.



VENTANA INN & SPA

CALIFORNIA, USA

Big Sur, the blissfully rugged coastline between San Francisco and Los Angeles, is early to bed and early to rise. Which works out well with jetlag, especially if you're staying at the Ventana. You can drink coffee in your balcony's hammock, be taught yoga in front of a crackling fire by a girl straight out of a Beach Boys song, eat freshly baked cinnamon buns on the terrace overlooking nothing but the ocean, then explore the hotel's vast parkland with avuncular guide Greg (who'll have you searching for mountain-lion tracks and picking wild bay leaves to take home) – all before 11am. Which leaves the rest of the day to hike coastal trails and look out for humpback and blue whales blustering and breaching their way past. Or you could just slump by the pool with your nose in a Jack Kerouac. It was an early start, after all.

BOOK IT ELEGANT RESORTS (ELEGANTRESORTS.CO.UK; 01244 897517) OFFERS FIVE NIGHTS FROM £2,045, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

TOP SPOT STROLL TO THE RESTAURANT THROUGH WOODLAND SO POPULATED BY DEER, BIRDS AND SQUIRRELS, IT'S PRACTICALLY ENCHANTED.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

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BOOK IT EXCLUSIVE USE FROM £755 A NIGHT FOR UP TO 10, INCLUDING BREAKFAST AND TRANSFERS (RIADMENAANDBEYOND.COM; 00 212 5 2438 1828).

RIAD MENA
MARRAKESH, MOROCCO

It's only fitting that it was originally built as a private residence, because now you can have this chic new hotel/riad/home (ever so much nicer than your *actual* home) all to yourself. On the edge of the Medina and surrounded by Indiana Jones-style narrow alleyways, Riad Mena is a groovy six-bedroomed affair. The aesthetic is pared-back-cool meets Marrakesh-eclectic: crisp Egyptian-cotton sheets, sleek contemporary lamps, vintage kilims and lots of leather pouffes to plonk onto. The chef magics up wicked tagines, and black and white movies are shown under the stars on the terrace, or you can retreat to your own sweat-it-all-out hammam. The owner also has a permaculture farm nearby – escape the city heat for dips in the natural pool or yoga facing the Atlas Mountains.

NO. 38 THE PARK CHELTENHAM, ENGLAND

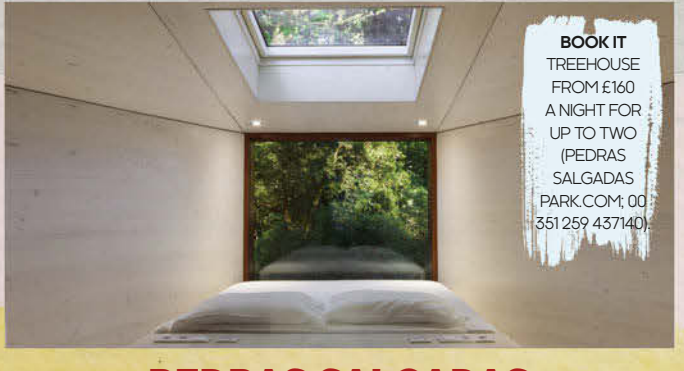
The Lucky Onion group is slowly taking over Cheltenham and raising the bar wherever it goes. Its latest venture is a Jane Austenesque villa, the kind of place where Sir Walter Elliot would be shocked to find his drawing room turned into an enormous turquoise boudoir sleeping two. There are 12 other bedrooms and the whole house comes at a bargain £2,600, with a chef thrown in. Nannies, butlers and spa treatments can also be booked. Witty decorative touches by Georgina Pearman abound – huge portholes frame mirrors, tea cosies are mini Arran sweaters – and there's a retro-style honesty bar that could make a dishonest woman out of you. It's your ideal house party, on a plate.

BOOK IT EXCLUSIVE USE FROM £2,600 A NIGHT FOR UP TO 26, INCLUDING DINNER (NO38THEPARK.COM; 01242 822929).

MATAKAURI LODGE OWNER'S COTTAGE QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

Make sure you tell your friends the second you book in, so they'll have more time to think of increasingly outrageous ways to suck up to you in the hope of being one of the lucky few you take along. The cottage has four bedrooms with glass-panelled balconies, soothing cream interiors and rainforest showers. The sitting room has sleek white leather and timbered ceilings – telltale signs that this is the work of local interiors grande dame Virginia Fisher. But the absolute highlight is the view. Head out onto the enormous balcony, fling off your clothes and hop into the hot tub, where you and your pals can gaze out across icy Lake Wakatipu and the snow-capped Remarkables. It sleeps eight, so best suckers-up only, please.

BOOK IT TURQUOISE HOLIDAYS (TURQUOISEHOLIDAYS.CO.UK; 01494 678400) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FOR UP TO EIGHT, FROM £9,975, INCLUDING FLIGHTS.



BOOK IT TREEHOUSE FROM £160 A NIGHT FOR UP TO TWO (PEDRASSALGADASPARK.COM; 00 351 259 437140).

PEDRAS SALGADAS
PEDRAS SALGADAS, PORTUGAL

There is a little part of us that will forever dream of treehouses – that misses the scuffed knees and twiggy hair and wild sense of adventure that we last felt when perched, aged nine, high up in gnarled branches, legs swinging. Recapture some of that spirit at Pedras Salgadas, set in the middle of a century-old forest in Portugal. Here, you'll discover very slick, very futuristic, very grown-up treehouses (twiggy hair just won't do) that look like something George Lucas sketched on the back of an envelope. Outside they're slate and wood; inside it's sleek and pale, with high-thread-count cotton sheets and an enormous skylight for stargazing. There are also little stilted cabins with private terraces, dotted in between the soaring sequoias – book a bunch for a (literally) wild party. This is a place to yomp in, to get lost in, to hide away and rejoice and holler at the freedom of the forest.

PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD POWERS, SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK

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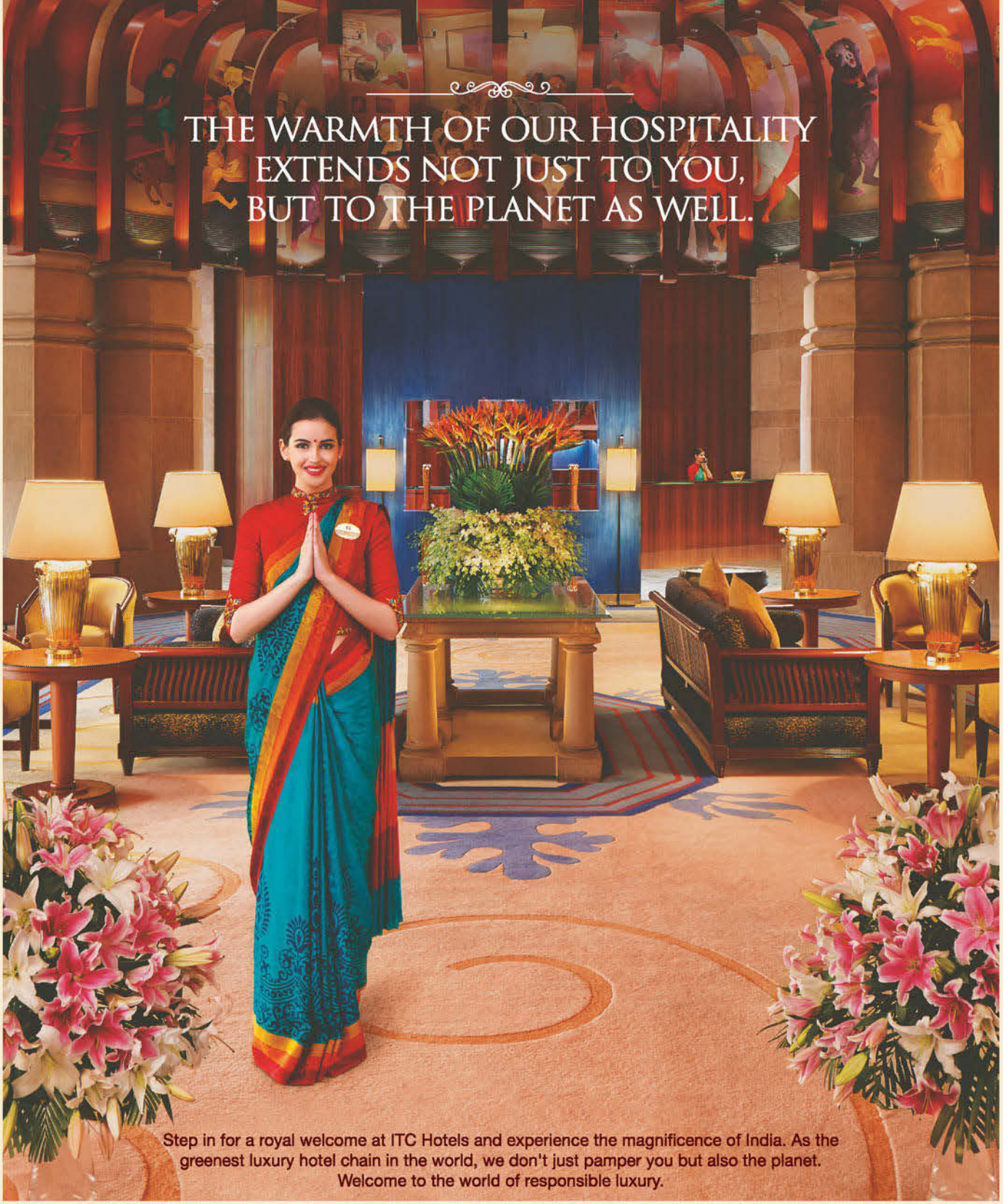

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP, ITC GRAND CHOLA IN CHENNAI; KAYA KALP, THE ROYAL SPA AT THE ITC MUGHAL IN AGRA; ITC RAJPUTANA IN JAIPUR

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If you've dreamed of discovering India – of finding fantastic food, incredible scenery (and maybe even yourself)– then let ITC Hotels make it a reality. With a mantra of 'Responsible Luxury', this Hotel chain maintains all the trappings of sophistication with an environmental conscience. It is the greenest luxury hotel chain in the world. Guilt-free decadence? Our favourite kind.

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Experience complete Indian itineraries with this luxury hotelier – enjoy renowned signature cuisine and award-winning wellness retreats all in opulent surroundings. From vibrant New Delhi to the picturesque South and historical Mumbai, ITC Hotels packs the best that India has to offer into mini adventures. Prepare to be spellbound...

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Begin your journey in the capital city of New Delhi at the luxurious haven, the ITC Maurya. A favourite among world leaders, the hotel also houses two of Asia's most sought-after restaurants: Bukhara and Dum Pukht. Next stop is Agra, where you will receive a royal welcome at the ITC Mughal. A stone's throw from the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, the hotel also boasts a beautiful pool and spa for complete indulgence. On to Jaipur, the 'Pink City' of India, where the ITC Rajputana echoes the region's artistry with its magnificent architecture. Marvel at the City Palace or take a trip to Jaigarh Fort on the hilltop for a breathtaking panoramic view. Complete your journey of the Golden Triangle at the ITC Grand Bharat in Gurgaon – ITC Hotels' newest offering and India's first all-suite luxury resort. Nestled in an idyllic setting, the resort offers a royal spa, a 27-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course and bespoke banqueting for the ultimate experience in luxury.

SOUTHERN SPLENDOUR

Get your Indian adventure off to a luxurious start with the ITC Grand Chola, in Chennai. Rejuvenate at the spa, take a stroll along the local Marina beach and soak up the atmosphere of this bustling city. Travel on to Bengaluru (Bangalore), the garden city of India, which beckons with its old-world charm. Stay at either the ITC Gardenia, inspired by the city's flourishing gardens, or the aristocratic ITC Windsor, which evokes the early days of the Raj. End your journey of southern India at Hyderabad and reflect upon the history and culture with a stay at ITC Kakatiya. Here, the magnificent architecture echoes the Kakatiya dynasty and blends seamlessly with the heritage of Nizams.

WESTERN GRANDEUR AND EASTERN SOLACE

The cosmopolitan hub of Mumbai in western India is a perfect introduction to the wonders of this country. Experience the region's vintage charm at the ITC Maratha. Explore the nearby Kanheri caves or amble around the city's many galleries and museums. Meanwhile, the ITC Grand Central – evoking Mumbai's colonial history – provides a stylish alternative. Or look east to Kolkata and experience the heritage of Bengal with the ITC Sonar, India's first business resort, which captures the essence of the city's spirit with its verdant gardens.

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GOOD VIBRATIONS

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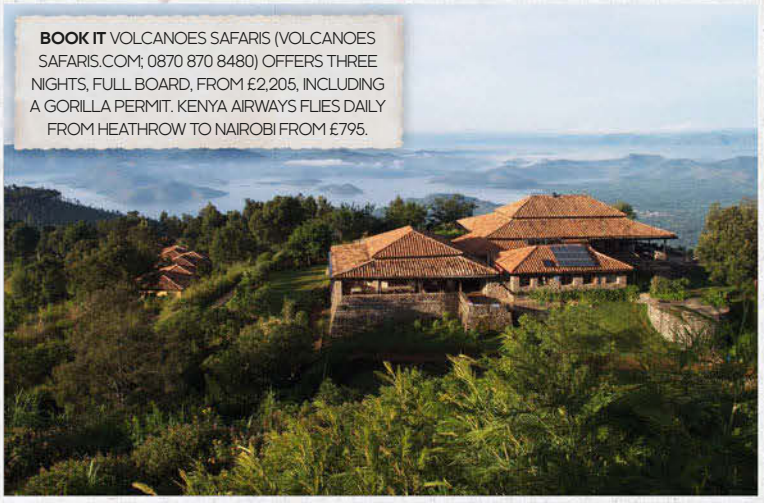
TATLER AWARD WINNER
STYLE WITH SOUL

NIHIWATU SUMBA, INDONESIA

It's had a few incarnations, this place. Nihiwatu came into the world as a humble surf lodge, which evolved into something of a rite of passage for Europe's smartest clans (the Hermès family and Sisley's d'Ornanos). They were drawn by one of the world's best breaks and the wild landscape – on Sumba, an hour's flight from already-a-schlep Bali – as well as the alluring, devil-may-care character of Nihiwatu's original surf-dude owner, Claude Graves. Word spread, and soon moviemakers and CEOs rocked up in search of a new sense of stylish simplicity. Then, two years ago, it changed hands – entrepreneur Chris Burch (ex-husband of Tory) spent handsomely spiffing up the villas (giant four-posters, private pools, outdoor 'bedrooms' where you can sleep under the stars above the 1.5-mile-long beach). And he added polished extras too: fancier food, thanks to the ex-Aman chef, and beauty treatments. Old hands held their collective breath, but the result has been nothing short of sensational. The resort's untamed character has not changed a smidgen; nor has its laudable attitude to its less privileged neighbours. Guests are encouraged to give generously (they do) to the Sumba Foundation, jollied along by the weekly screening of a hard-hitting video at the bar, explaining the harsh facts of the area's rates of disease and illiteracy. Or they can head out on day trips to help with the foundation's fieldwork. But the best testimony to Nihiwatu's commitment to Sumbanese life is its direct employment of so many locals. It's an extraordinary place with extraordinary heart, and just goes to show that the right kind of reincarnation can bring about a whole lot of good karma.

BOOK IT RED SAVANNAH (REDSAVANNAH.COM; 01242 787800) OFFERS EIGHT NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, AS PART OF A NINE-NIGHT TRIP, FROM £5,500, INCLUDING FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.



BOOK IT VOLCANOES SAFARIS (VOLCANOESSAFARIS.COM; 0870 870 8480) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £2,205, INCLUDING A GORILLA PERMIT. KENYA AIRWAYS FLIES DAILY FROM HEATHROW TO NAIROBI FROM £795.

VIRUNGA LODGE

MUSANZE, RWANDA

If you go all dreamy at the very thought of mountain gorillas, put this at the top of your bucket list. Virunga Lodge has been here for 10 years, and to celebrate has created two new suites, overlooking Lake Bulera and the very volcanic foothills where Dian Fossey had her big gorilla love-in. It's all terrifically *Out of Africa*: shared candlelit suppers, wraparound verandas, four-poster beds, open fires and private terraces for misty mountain gazing and sun-drowsy snoozes. You'll need those naps, as you're here for one thing: the gorillas, which you'll be tracking from before dawn, scrambling up through slippery forest (often in mud and pouring rain, for hours and hours and hours). But it's all worth it when you find them, hanging out, having a natter, chomping away, giving you the once-over every now and again. Magical.

SONG SAA

KOH RONG ARCHIPELAGO, CAMBODIA

When the moon hits your eye... it's likely you'll have an oyster in one hand and champagne beading a glass in the other, while that old charmer in the sky turns it on full whack as you sit back and sigh. Because *amore* is exactly what you'll feel for these two tiny islands off the Cambodian coast. You'll be in love with your villa, its polished-wood floor smooth underfoot, the sun-soaked deck flirting with the indecently close waves. You'll be wooed by boat trips to deserted beaches, tiffin-tin picnics beneath giant paper parasols and diving among electric-blue anemones. And you'll probably have a bit of a crush on your hosts too – Rory and Melita Hunter have not only built an utterly soul-soothing place to stay, they've also established a marine reserve, set up local sustainability projects and repurposed a fishing boat to distribute medical supplies to nearby islands. It's a labour of love that's created something pretty special – we dare you not to fall for it, big time.

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BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £75. (RESPONSIBLETRAVEL.COM; 01273 823700)

BUTTERFLY HOUSE BAHIA, BRAZIL

The Maraú Peninsula is remote. We're talking off the radar – a far-flung sliver of land, with nothing but powder-soft beaches, a handful of fishing villages and steamy, luscious jungle. So remote, in fact, that Chloe Gibbs, the delightfully dotty young English owner, ended up here by throwing a peanut at a map and deciding to move to wherever the nut landed. See? Properly bonkers. Sandwiched between the Atlantic surf and a freshwater lake, Butterfly House is all about ethical, with eight bungalows and suites built from sustainably grown bamboo and salvaged Brazil-nut wood, solar-powered showers and waste recycling. But ethical does not mean dowdy, not at all. Chloe has muddled together Brazilian farmhouse, Provençal vintage and Moroccan riad – brilliantly stylish but entirely laidback. So it's perfectly fine to be unashamedly idle, flitting from daybed to hammock to poolside, for a caipirinha, lobster salad and acai ice cream. Or you can start the day with yoga, then paddleboard and finish with a surf lesson. Anything goes.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MICHAEL TUREK, SHUTTERSTOCK. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

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GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO LAKE COMO, ITALY

You come here for the lake, of course – lined with the neoclassical villas of celebrities and framed by spectacular mountains that turn candyfloss-pink at sunset. But the Tremezzo is why guests come back year after year. It's super-chic and super-classy but with a jaunty spring in its step (they'd probably call it *gioia di vivere*): splashes of signature orange everywhere; button-backed sofas upholstered in the colours of Ladurée macaroons; unfailingly, genuinely charming staff of the sort you only find in a family-owned hotel. And Clooney, Clooney, Clooney – the darned man is everywhere. Hanging out in the hotel bar (kickass negronis), joshing with the staff on the beach, thundering past on his Harley. Honestly, we were sick of the sight of him. Bed down in one of the rooftop suites, which have a jacuzzi on the terrace, a wall-to-wall marble bathroom, the silkiest sheets and That View. But you must tear yourself away and don your biggest sunglasses to take to the water in the hotel's 1961 Venetian motor launch. Diego, the delightful captain, will tell you who stays where. Then drop by the hotel's floating swimming pool on the lake, or the private sandy lido and bar. Too chilly? Head to the Piscina dei Fiori, *pictured*, in the gardens. And for the attention-seekers, there's always the lake. ▷

BOOK IT CLASSIC COLLECTION (0800 294 9315; CLASSIC-COLLECTION.CO.UK) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS FROM £1,050, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

PACK YOUR HEELS

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

THE SINGULAR SANTIAGO

SANTIAGO, CHILE

Stepping into this modern building in Santiago's Lastarria neighbourhood is like stepping through the looking glass. Brass-handled black doors are opened by suited doormen and in you stroll, to a world more akin to Claridge's – all the more so when you meet the British manager, Nick Russ. The concierge wields a box of chocolates; the ground-floor bar thrums with chic Euros, Hamptonesque Americans and well-coiffed Chileans, all sipping cocktails served by waiters in white jackets and bow ties. It's brand new but feels as though it has a bit of history – rooms have leather steamer-trunk drawers, antique prints, anglepoise lamps and French paintings. There's a rooftop bar and pool, a cool spa (try the Chakra Ritual, if you're that way inclined) and the restaurant is becoming a hotspot – Patagonian lamb, king crab and guanaco tartare. The hardest part: choosing which of the 50 local wines to wash it all down with.

BOOK IT RAINBOW TOURS (RAINBOWTOURS.CO.UK; 020 7666 1260) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS FROM £1,355, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS. AIR FRANCE (AIRFRANCE.CO.UK) AND KLM (KLM.COM) FLY FROM THE UK TO SANTIAGO DAILY, FROM £592.

PACK YOUR HEELS

BOOK IT
DOUBLE, FROM £220 (MERRION HOTEL.COM; 00 353 1 603 0600). BRITISH AIRWAYS (BA.COM) FLIES FROM LONDON CITY TO DUBLIN DAILY, FROM £61.

THE MERRION DUBLIN, IRELAND

You'd be forgiven for walking along Upper Merrion Street and completely missing the Merrion. It's so discreet that the derby-topped doorman is the only hint that these Georgian townhouses comprise Dublin's finest hotel. Nothing about it shouts hotel; it's far too refined to shout. The reception rooms are grand and elegant – a Corinthian cornice here, rococo plasterwork there – but in the cosiest way possible (yes, there are log fires). Curl up on a club chair with a copy of *The Irish Times* and order scones with clotted cream served on a silver tray, the scones still hot from the oven. People-watch in the glorious garden (weather permitting) and don't be surprised if you spot Edna O'Brien – she's a regular. When the sightseeing/rain has got the best of you, retreat to the spa, dip in the pool or work your way through the cocktail list at the Cellar Bar. And don't miss Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud, but book well in advance as it's the only restaurant in Ireland with two Michelin stars. It's just grand.

PARK HYATT NEW YORK

NEW YORK, USA

Park Hyatt's new New York flagship on West 57th Street is so sleek and ergonomically contoured that you want to make full-body contact with all its surfaces. There are miles of marble to glide on and acres of sweet-smelling leather to stroke. To take on the big boys, the hotel has had to come up with some real zingers – guest rooms are above- average large; towels are the size of double-decker buses; lifts arrive three seconds after you press the button. The 26th-floor gym is so state of the art it could turn the flabbiest couch potato into a fitness freak, and swimmers in the lap pool can listen to a playlist created by the team at Carnegie Hall, which is just across the street. In the restaurant, the Back Room at One57, classic grills come with an Asian twist. Top of our list is the Back Room Breakfast, which costs £250, and comes with a bottle of 2003 Dom Pérignon. ▷

TATLER OFFER FOUR NIGHTS FROM £1,950, INCLUDING FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND TWO FREE TICKETS TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK/TATLER; 0161 826 2866).

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

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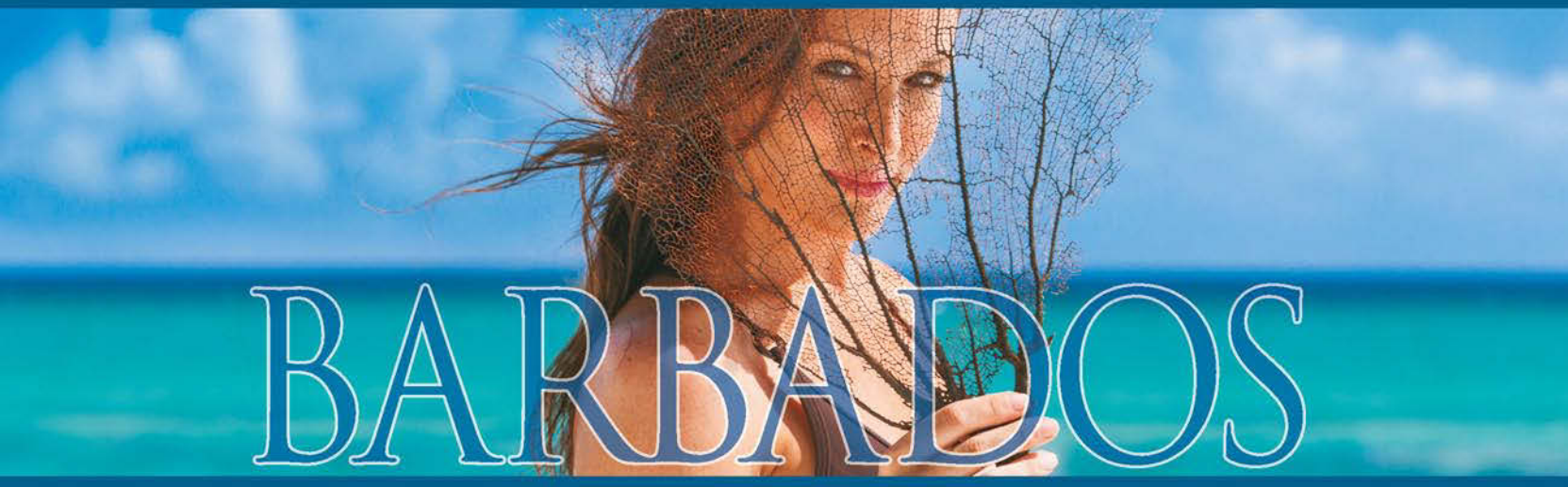

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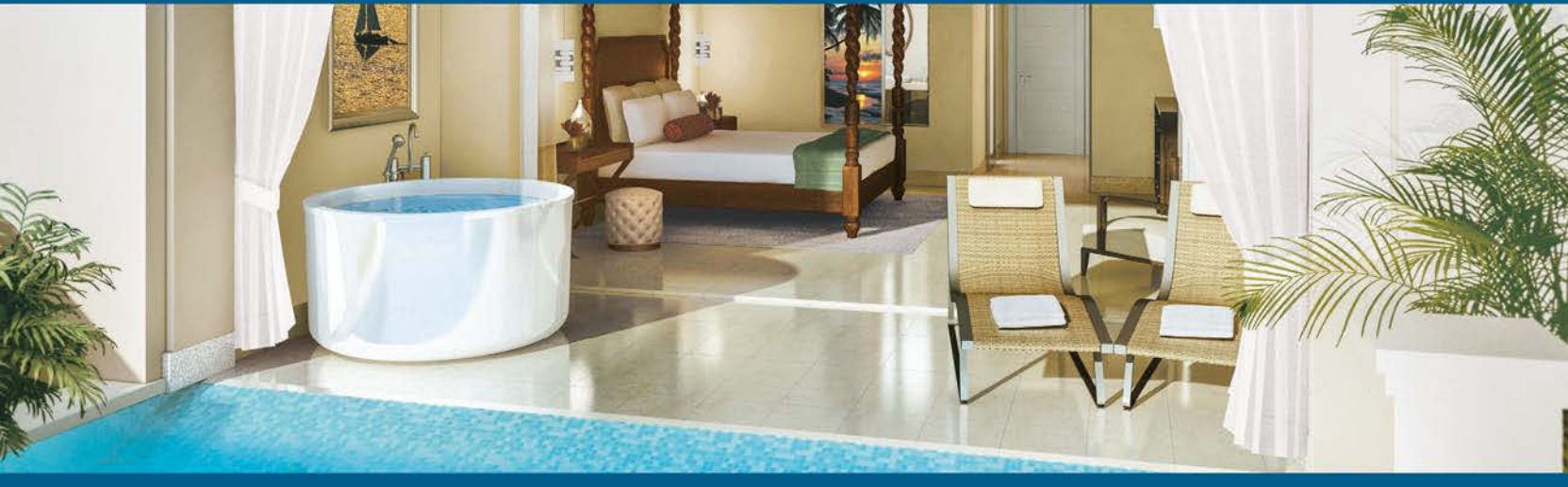

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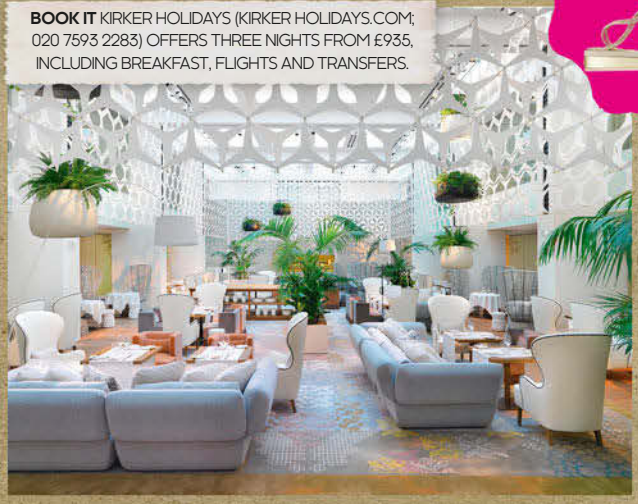
PORTRAIT FIRENZE
FLORENCE, ITALY

Overlooking the Ponte Vecchio, Portrait Firenze (the latest addition to the Ferragamo stable) is like your very own high-fashion Florentine apartment. It has floor-to-ceiling windows, which means you could admire the wonders of this city without ever leaving your supersized bed (but that rather misses the point; you're here for the shops and sights and shops). The 34 suites are vast, with dark-wood floors and a sumptuous grey palette. And, on a more practical note, there's a kitchenette. Bathrooms are chock-a-block with silky smooth marble and Salvatore Ferragamo toiletries; iPads are here, there and everywhere, but technology is subtle. Techie highlight: link your music up to the Bluetooth sound system and twerk the night away (draw the curtains, please). The slightly sparse Caffè dell'Oro serves 'mood food' – traditional Italian recipes shoehorned into various vibes. So if you're feeling 'sexy', you'll be getting lemon air and caviar with your risotto. *Molto* chic.

PACK YOUR FLATS



BOOK IT KIRKER HOLIDAYS (KIRKER HOLIDAYS.COM; 020 7593 2283) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS FROM £935, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL BARCELONA
BARCELONA, SPAIN

Gently imposing, stupidly chic and slap-bang where you want to be (Passeig de Gràcia – shopping heaven), Barcelona's Mandarin Oriental is the best of all possible worlds. There are five new rooms and 17 new suites, some with their own landscaped gardens and outdoor terraces, all decked out in a glamorous but cosy style – rather like the girl or boy who looks way out of your league but turns out to be happy to sleep with you *and* makes a mean roast chicken. The rooftop café and pool, staffed by eager chino-wearing waiters, have been revamped and now pack in a hell of a scene – they come for the lip-smacking ceviche and stay to gawp at the 360° views of the city and mountains. There's a darkly labyrinthine gym, pool and spa featuring (praise his name) Bastien pedicures. It's pet-friendly too – well, for dogs and cats at least. And there's a Manolo Blahnik boutique in the lobby. Now THAT's irresistible.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £155 (HOTEL URSO.COM; 00 34 914 444 458). EASYJET (EASYJET.COM) FLIES FROM LONDON TO MADRID UP TO SEVEN TIMES A DAY, FROM £35.

HOTEL URSO
MADRID, SPAIN

Life in Madrid is joyously manic, and while we love being in the centre of the action, forget the *actual* centre. Instead, trot over to the areas of Malasaña, Chueca and Tribunal, where all the smart people are, and the best shops, bars, restaurants and galleries. Happily, this little number, claiming to be Madrid's first five-star boutique hotel, is just a few minutes' stroll from all three. The century-old building has held on to a lot of original features: handpainted tiles, stained-glass windows and a magnificent mahogany lift. Kick off the day with a very late, very carb-loaded breakfast while gazing up at the blue sky through the glass roof. A citrusy treatment in the Natura Bissé spa will set you up nicely to hit the boutiques. Flats essential. ▷

BRITISH AIRWAYS HAS HIT THE JACKPOT WITH ITS 22 NEW **DAY-TRIPPER ROUTES** FROM LONDON HEATHROW TO EUROPE'S TIPPETY-TOP SIGHTSEEING CITIES. WHIZZ OVER BRIGHT AND EARLY, WHOOP IT UP ALL DAY, AND FLY BACK LAST THING, FROM £79. (BA.COM)

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

TRUE BLUE

Blue Palace in Crete invites you into a stress-free world, where you'll find water-lapping, sun-bleached perfection

With its dramatic coastline and azure waters, it's easy to see how Crete became the setting for epic myths – a paradise dotted with deities. Once favoured by Zeus and Aphrodite, it remains a sun-drenched bastion of indulgence, beckoning elite clientele year after year.

Blue Palace, a luxury resort on the coast of Elounda in Crete, is as regal as its name suggests. 251 guest rooms and 52 suites make up this holiday haven, a myriad of swirling arches, swaying palm trees and impossibly perfect swimming pools. The resort overlooks the historical island of Spinalonga – a jaw-dropping view to relish as you bathe or dine. There are plenty of options for both, with 142 private infinity pools and five exclusive restaurants. Choose from traditional Greek fare at the Blue Door Taverna, Oriental cuisine at Asia Blue or hearty steaks for the carnivore at the Flame grill. The restaurants Isola and Olea serve up Mediterranean delicacies on the veranda, where you'll take in a healthy dollop of scenery with every meal. If that heavenly vista isn't enough to relax you, try the award-winning Elounda Spa & Thalassotherapy, with treatments to buff the body beautiful and induce mouth-drooling states of tranquility. Opt for pampering sessions using luxury products Valmont and Cinq Mondes or fully indulge in one of two traditional marble Turkish Hammams.

And should you tire of languid lounging, what then, I hear you ask? Beyond the private beach and heated pools lies a whole host of excursion possibilities. The dedicated guest service is on hand to help you create a truly memorable itinerary. Our favourites include the island of Spinalonga, with its ancient fortresses, or the speedboat jaunt to a traditional fishing village. Bliss.

To book: visit bluepalace.gr or call 00 30 284 106 5500

VAULT KARAKÖY
ISTANBUL, TURKEY

The House Hotel Group's fourth hotel in Istanbul is in the up-and-coming 'hood of Karaköy, where hip restaurants sit next to testosterone-filled tea houses. It's situated in a vast Ottoman-era bank and has many of its grand original features, but instead of Byzantine bling they've gone for sleek bespoke furniture and contemporary local art. Gaze across the Golden Horn to Sultanahmet's minarets from the roof terrace, or, even better, from the penthouse suite's bath. After a hard day's sightseeing, head to the hotel's hammam to be scrubbed and massaged into a state of baby-skinned floppiness. Or check out the vaults, one of which has been reinvented as a stylish bar. It's Istan-cool.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £190, INCLUDING BREAKFAST (THEHOUSEHOTEL.COM; 00 90 212 244 6434).

METROPOLITAN BY COMO, MIAMI BEACH MIAMI, USA

Miami Beach has a tendency to bling. It's probably all that sand and sunshine and silky bikini bods – makes them go a bit funny in the head. Not so the brand new COMO. Petite, discreet and cool as a cucumber, it sits in a ravishing 1939 art-deco gem. Rooms have pistachio-green walls, black and white floors and beds with white leather headboards. Guests can swan around the private beach area (slightly removed from the bootilicious local crowds), or pop up to the rooftop pool. Or you can hide away in the fabulous Shambhala spa for a holistic Dr Hauschka facial. We love the Traymore restaurant – especially the soft fish tacos with jalapeño cream, washed down with a cooling gin, lemon and cucumber juice. Just the thing to set you up for a saunter down the strip and a howdya-do to the natives.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £275, INCLUDING BREAKFAST (COMOHOTELS.COM; 001 305 695 3600).

PACK YOUR TRAINERS

THE RITZ-CARLTON KYOTO
KYOTO, JAPAN

Kyoto's first major luxury hotel calls itself an 'urban resort', which is frankly a bit toe-curling. And yet... it is wafty and spacious and elegant, which means you feel miles from the heart of the city. Rooms, with little bonsai trees, are large and very zen, as are the views: the Kamagawa river and distant mountains. Bathroom walls and the big bathtub have cherry-blossom designs worked into them, and there's a TV that appears in the bathroom mirror. There are four choices for food: the Lobby Lounge for afternoon tea; the Pierre Hermé macaroon and cake shop for munchies; La Locanda for Italian; and Modern Japanese at Mizuki. We like the ESPA spa and love the Ryokucha Serenity Ritual, a pounding with hot poultices soaked in green tea. There's also a chic pool, lit at night with lanterns. All that's missing is a beach...

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £330, INCLUDING BREAKFAST (RITZCARLTON.COM; 00 81 3 3423 8000). BRITISH AIRWAYS (BA.COM) FLIES TO TOKYO TWICE A DAY, FROM £670. RAIL CONNECTIONS TO KYOTO (WESTJR.CO.JP).

SOFITEL SO SINGAPORE
SINGAPORE

It's SO hard to resist the obvious puns when it comes to Accor's new offering at the heart of Singapore, especially when it's all around you: the wifi is labelled 'SO connected', the turndown chocolates are 'SO naughty'. But this is SO much more than a one-trick pony. It has all sorts of groovy touches, from the fluffy bathrobes designed by Karl Lagerfeld to a rooftop bar and pool where you can chill while the city flashes and bleeps and buzzes around you. Another neat trick is that each room comes with an iPhone and iPad, and there's free dry-cleaning – perfect if you're on a layover, which you probably are. Add thoughtful service, a pristine location and a decidedly funky edge – this is SO where we're staying next time we're in Singapore.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £170 (SOFITEL.COM; 00 65 6701 6800). SINGAPORE AIRLINES (SINGAPOREAIR.COM) FLIES FROM LONDON TO SINGAPORE DAILY, FROM £805.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

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Monarch — East Midlands

RYANAIR — Birmingham, Bournemouth,* Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow (Prestwick),* Leeds Bradford, Liverpool, London Stansted & Luton

Terms & Conditions apply. *Summer Routes. **Commence May 2015.

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MALTA
MALTA GOZO COMINO

SHOWDOWN!

It's the battle of the St Barth's big guns

CHEVAL BLANC ST-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE

BAIE DES FLAMANDS

Your corner Baie des Flamands is a wild white arc, backed by lush tropical gardens. Top class.
In the ring Accomodation is *très chic*: white white white, with the odd pop of blue or pink. The three-bed villas both have their own pool, if the 10 steps to the sea prove just too much for you.
A shore thing It all feels terrifically remote and exclusive (and this is St Barth's, so go figure). There's snorkelling and paddle-boarding and jet-skiing, but most guests prefer to spend their time perfecting the art of lounging, lizard-like, on the sunbeds, strolling to the pool for a dip or waving a lazy arm for a glass of Château d'Esclans rosé.
Nutrition Smart, hushed, white-linen dining in the evening, and more relaxed toes-in-the-sand lunches of seafood and sandwiches at the beach restaurant, which is a bit like Club 55 but without Kate Moss and her fag smoke.
Health check New owners Cheval Blanc have installed a shiny spa by Guerlain: try the soothing Sun Energy treatment. The gym has a pretty hillside location too.
Time out Tuesday night is fashion-show night, which sounds naff but is kind of fun, when local gals show off the black-pearl jewellery and Pucci kaftans from the (bloody brilliant) little shop.
Just champion The fabulous Frenchness of it all. It's St Tropez with a splash of rum.

VS

EDEN ROCK ST BARTH'S

ST JEAN BAY

Your corner You can't fault this location: right on a rocky outcrop between two gorgeous bays of apricot-coloured sand and that glowing turquoise water you only find in the Caribbean.
In the ring Rooms are all different. Make like Marilyn in the Howard Hughes Loft, a dream of smooth wood and chrome. Or take one of the villas on the other side of the beach: modern and cool, with sleek concrete and eye-popping modern art.
A shore thing The main beach is a stunner and the smaller bay, a swift snorkel around the rock (be brave), is calm as a millpond and home to Nikki Beach – perfect for a pre-dinner snifter. The airport is nearby, but it's about the size of a garden shed and the planes taking off above are teeny tiny.
Nutrition Completely brilliant food, from the moreish ceviche or grilled mahimahi by the beach at lunch, to lobster fritters, shrimp tacos and brie-and-truffle burger (you will want to dive in, face first), served up high on the rock in the evening. The cucumber martini will send you off with a swing in your tail.
Health check There isn't a spa, but there are in-room treatments and a massage corner on the beach.
Time out The little art gallery is Shoreditch-cool and there are oodles of watersports (but nothing motorised, so no noisy jet skis).
Just champion The service, woo-hooed up by new owners Oetker Collection, is friendly without being obsequious, slick without being cold, and utterly on the ball in every way. It's a winner.

BOOK IT ITC LUXURY TRAVEL (ITCLUXURYTRAVEL.CO.UK; 01244 355527) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS AT SAINT-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE AND THREE NIGHTS AT EDEN ROCK ST BARTH'S FROM £2,959, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, BRITISH AIRWAYS AND TRADEWIND AVIATION FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

ELOUNDA GULF VILLAS
Villas & Suites

ELOUNDA CRETE GREECE

a unique hideaway

Exclusive and award-winning, Elounda Gulf Villas & Suites on the Greek island of Crete is a must-visit holiday destination, particularly since new developments and services will be available for 2015. The family-owned and run Boutique Villa - Hotel, which is a proud member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, is close to the lively Cretan village of Elounda and offers 18 villas - each with a private pool and Jacuzzi, and some with private spa facilities, 5 Massage Pool Suites and 10 Deluxe suites which have been individually designed with the peacefulness and harmony of your home in mind.

Facilities such as a private beach club together with 2 a la carte restaurants, a lounge bar, an elixir Spa Gallery and a kids club combined with unique tailor-made services make this Boutique Hotel one of its kind!

Tatler Reader Offer

Book before 28 February 2015 to enjoy **20% off** accommodation plus **complimentary Half Board**

To book or for more information contact
T: +30 2810 227721, **UK Reservations:** 0871 990 3010, quote TATLER 15
info@eloundavillas.com **www.eloundavillas.com**

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Certificate of Excellence 2014 WINNER
Elounda Gulf Villas

VILLA GAIA, APHRODITE HILLS RESORT, CYPRUS

PERSONAL PARADISE

Choose the freedom to get away your way, with James Villa Holidays

Picture a home away from home. All the comfort, convenience and privacy but with a welcome dollop of indulgence. James Villa Holidays creates this picture to postcard perfection with its collection of luxury villas in prime locations. Meandering coastlines, pretty villages and tranquil countryside all fall within the remit of this villa specialist, which has over 2700 properties – including more than 100 luxury villas – across more than 50 destinations. That's a lot of azure blue sky and a lot of sunshine. With experts handpicking each villa and meticulously checking standards, this is holiday rental as it should be. James Villa Holidays has over 30 years' experience and is the UK's leading villa holiday specialist – and the luxury villa collection is the crème de la crème of its portfolio. Here, the James experts pick their top destinations for 2015. Start packing your bags...

APHRODITE ROCK, CYPRUS

VILLA GAIA, THE ONE FOR FAMILIES

Villa Gaia (shown above), in the appropriately named Aphrodite Hills Resort in Cyprus, is fit for a goddess. This villa sleeps ten and is perfect for large families. Its sweeping arches overlook a beautifully landscaped garden and, further afield, the resort's 18-hole golf course. Parents and children alike will find a range of sporting and leisure activities at Aphrodite Hills Resort, while an eight-seat outside Jacuzzi will entice less energetic sun worshippers – the swimming pool is a lilo-inducing 27 metres in length. Guests also receive a complimentary deluxe food hamper on arrival and a continental breakfast hand-delivered to the door each morning. A chef, nanny, butler, masseuse and maid can all be called upon to help holiday life flow more easily. These 'extra special additions' make the villa feel like your own hotel. Just Heavenly.

VILLA CARLOTA, LANZAROTE

PUERTO CALERO MARINA, LANZAROTE

Embrace the spontaneity of private villa life – long and languid alfresco dining, midnight dips – in an environment that is all fun and no hassle

VILLA CARLOTA, THE ONE FOR NIGHTLIFE

Located within the exclusive resort of Puerto Calero, Lanzarote and a short distance from lively Puerto del Carmen, is this serene, four-bedroom property. The villa's grounds are enclosed by a stone wall for ultimate privacy. Spend your days in blissful seclusion, ambling from your own pool and Jacuzzi (no crowded splashing here) to your fully equipped outdoor kitchen – no excuse for not cooking up a storm on chilled alfresco evenings. Tranquil days will revitalise you after sleepless nights. Puerto del Carmen has a vibrant nightlife with plenty of bars and restaurants on offer. For more reserved nights, opt for a dinner in one of the many restaurants in the Puerto Calero marina. La dolce villa.

GONDRA, THE ONE FOR SPORTS

This stylish six-bedroom villa located in the exclusive Quinta do Lago resort in the Algarve oozes luxury. Its ingenious design creates a feeling of space, with outdoor rooms dotted along the terrace. Dip in and out of your private pool, recline on one of the sunloungers and enjoy long evenings in the outdoor dining area. Children will be beside themselves with excitement in the fully equipped games room, boasting a football table and surround sound music system. Gondra is perched tantalisingly close to all amenities – with golf courses, restaurants and local beaches all just a short drive away. Quinta de Lago resort has just had one of its prestigious golf courses renovated by Ryder cup captain, Paul Mc Ginley, making this an excellent choice for golfing fanatics.

WHAT TO PACK

SWIMWEAR365.CO.UK

ABOVE LEFT, ALBA MODA GREEN FLORAL PRINT BANDEAU SWIMSUIT, £109. *ABOVE RIGHT,* HEINE YELLOW FLORAL APPLIQUÉ TUNIC, £59.

CARVOEIRO BEACH, THE ALGARVE

GONDRA, THE ALGARVE

LOOK TO JAMES VILLA HOLIDAYS FOR A LUXURIOUS GET-AWAY. ENQUIRE ABOUT "EXTRA SPECIAL ADDITIONS" ON: 0800 074 0122

TATLER AWARD WINNER
FAMILY FROLICS

ANASSA NEO CHORIO, CYPRUS

Cyprus has Europe's longest summers. We'll just let that sink in for a second. EUROPE'S LONGEST SUMMERS. Which means no sand-gritty sandwiches, no windbreakers, no jumpers on the beach. It means no long-haul schlep for a blast of late-season or early-spring sun. It means the balmy benefits of a Mediterranean high season, but with none of the madness. So that's one thing that's brilliant. Another is there's no bling. And another: oodles of breathe-easy nature. And, finally, Anassa, with its long stretch of beach by the Troodos foothills. This hotel isn't new, or boutique chic, or even particularly grand. But that's why we love it. It has staff who've worked here forever, guests who've been coming for aeons. It is family run, smart as a pin and adored by all. The 166 rooms are laid out in the style of a traditional Cypriot village, which sounds contrived but is utterly charming – and gives you space to spread out, to let the sprogs run wild. There are five restaurants, run by David Goodridge who trained under Raymond Blanc. But the best bit? You barely need to pack a thing – they have everything from bottle sterilisers to car seats to potties. Children will have to be prised out of the Explorers Club, with its tennis and shiny bikes. And early supper sittings and babysitting allow you to sneak off (guilt-free) to the gargantuan spa, with its blissful Ila treatments. Lie back and don't think of England.

TATLER OFFER

SAVE UP TO £690 PER COUPLE. SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £1,385, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND A DINNER FOR TWO AT HELIOS RESTAURANT. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK/TATLER; 0161 826 2866).*

TAKE THE TYKES

Fuss-free fun for very happy families

GLENEAGLES PERTHSHIRE, SCOTLAND

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £245, INCLUDING BREAKFAST (GLENEAGLES.COM; 0800 389 3737).

It's the school holidays. You have a 10-year old who's broken the PlayStation, an eight-year-old with ADHD and you've run out of Ritalin. Panic not. Bring them here, where they can romp in more than 800 glorious Scottish acres. The list of child-friendly activities is exhausting just to read. There's the usual cycling, tennis, golf and pony trekking. But there are also hearty – and, crucially, tiring – country pursuits like fishing lessons, gundog training, air-rifle classes, archery and falconry. Then, once they're so pooped they can barely speak, they can flop in the supervised chillout zone. Meanwhile, parents can wilt in the dazzling ESPA spa after dallying over the indulgent breakfast menu – black pudding? Waffles? Porridge with cream? All at once? Family rooms have every kind of interconnecting option to fit your brood. They'll be baying for their beds after all that fresh air.

GREAT BEAR LODGE

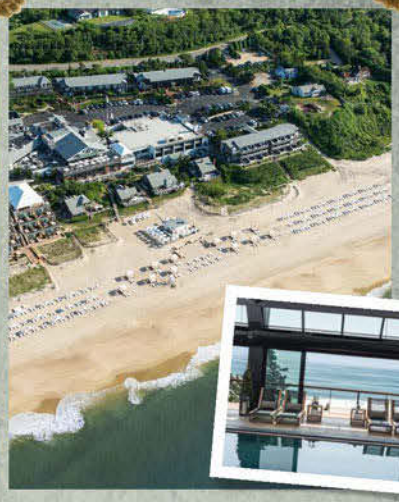
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

BOOK IT GREAT BEAR TOURS (GREATBEARTOURS.COM; 00 1 250 949 9496) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS, FROM £1,015, FULL BOARD, INCLUDING SEAPLANE FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS FROM PORT HARDY.

The tiny seaplane weaves up steep-sided fjords to splash down on the glassy waters outside the floating, eight-room Great Bear Lodge. It's deeply peaceful: the loudest noise is a buzzing cloud of rufous hummingbirds. But don't wander off – the locals do not like to be surprised while eating. This is grizzly country, and the expert guides will zip you up narrow streams on grizzly-viewing boat trips and on grizzly-spotting yomps through cedar forest and to grizzly-watching hides overlooking rapids where they stuff themselves with salmon. It's so thrilling that teenagers won't even mind waving goodbye to any mobile signal. And there are indoor creature comforts of cosy rooms, an open bar and scrumptions meals of – guess what? The bears' favourite, salmon.

HAVE AN ADVENTURE

Lonely Planet *Adventures in Wild Places* sticker book, £5.99 = peace and quiet. Phew. lonelyplanetkids.com



GURNEY'S MONTAUK

MONTAUK, USA

Head east, to the very end of Long Island – far, far away from the polo and the posing and the endless Louis Vuitton totes – to Montauk, where the living is easy and the surf is most definitely up. This groovy, laidback surfing town is home to the recently revitalised all-seasons Gurney's Montauk, an institution now ramped-up and ready for the new guard arriving with iPad-clutching teenagers, all set to tune out and hit the waves. Off they'll skip for their lessons, to a beach that stretches for miles, and you're left free to enjoy the sushi rolls and retro cocktails at the beach club, while you try to get a glimpse into Ralph Lauren's estate next door. Or scarper to the seawater spa for a thalassotherapy session. The kids will have made friends within seconds, which means movie night will trump dinner with the folks any day, so you can get glammed up for candlelit lobster. And when it's time for bed, they are those American supersized ones, which we like. The rooms, FYI, all have terraces that face the ocean, so you'll be able to spy on your teen trying to flirt around the firepit. ▷

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £130 (GURNEYSINN.COM; 00 1 631 668 2345).

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

Squeeze, fold, crush or roll – these Scrunch buckets, £6.99, are totally scrunchable AND rascal-proof. Good for grown-ups too – use them to catch clutter or pot plants. scrunch-bucket.com.

SALCOMBE HARBOUR HOTEL DEVON, ENGLAND

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £145 (SALCOMBE-HARBOUR-HOTEL.CO.UK; 01548 844444).

You tumble out of your car and the salty sea air hits you: a blast of Great British summer as tangible as a Flake-topped 99 dripping down your chin. This jolly new number looks directly over the estuary and all its busy boatiness, and has breezy rooms of calming white, beige and cheery candy-striped throws, plus private balconies – throw open your doors, breathe deep. Sweet touches include a 'balcony basket' with binoculars (for taking a peek at the boats, and the people on the boats), books to nose through and slippers to get cosy in. Tweens can laze on the sun terrace eyeing each other up, or swan around the pool in the gorgeous spa (the holistic massage will change your life), or scoff popcorn in the little 16-seater cinema. And they'll actually enjoy hanging out with you in the groovy Jetty restaurant eating retro prawn cocktail or stonkingly good paella – especially if they get a surprise virgin cocktail, to make them feel terrifically grown-up.

JUMBY BAY
ANTIGUA, CARIBBEAN

After a seven-minute boat ride from Antigua airport, close your eyes and tumble into a quiet world of butter-soft beaches, gentle winds and a calm, calm ocean as warm as a bath. Jumby is for families who want a bit of space but also a few whistles and a lot of child-friendly bells. The sand is sieved daily, the water is so clear and shallow you can spot starfish nudging about on the bottom and twinkly can-do staff cut through the Caribbean heat in crisp white shirts. Then there are the sleek suites and whacking great villas (sea-breezy Sandpiper is our favourite), with their enormous pools and private chefs. The offspring can spend their days crab racing in the shallows, going on baby-turtle discovery tours with the Rose Buds kids' club or pootling about on sweet little bikes (after they've gussied them up with shells, ribbons and personalised number plates). Don't miss the Sunday-night White Nights beach barbecue, a toes-in-the-sand, steel-drum-serenaded spectacle. If Disney did the Caribbean, Jumby would be it. ▷

TATLER OFFER SEVEN NIGHTS FOR THE PRICE OF SIX, FROM £4,435, ALL-INCLUSIVE, INCLUDING FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND A BEACH PICNIC. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK/TATLER; 0161 826 2866).*

BRING THE BUCKETS & SPADES

WANT TO RAISE A GREEN SPROG? THEN CHECK OUT OFF-GRID CAMP KERNOW. IT'S SET IN 210 ACRES OF WILD CORNISH COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE THEY'LL CLIMB TREES, TRACK ANIMALS AND LEARN ABOUT SUSTAINABLE LIVING. BINGO! A MINI ECO-WARRIOR. (CAMPKERNOW.ORG.UK)

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

GREECE IS THE WORD

For extraordinary five-star flair, head to Sani Resort – home to four out-of-this-world hotels ideal for family holidays

Halkidiki coastline

Family-owned Sani Resort – a close knit holiday haven which comprises Sani Beach Hotel, Sani Beach Club, Porto Sani Village and Sani Asterias Suites – has long been a favourite holiday destination of those in the know. Situated in a private eco-reserve in Halkidiki in northern Greece, this collection of luxury hotels and pristine beaches – each with its own unique character – now has even more to offer.

The attentive five-star service of the hotels has been transported outside in the form of the Sani Beach Experience. This ensures guests of all ages will be exceptionally well looked after while soaking up the Greek sun.

Beach Buddy waiters serve refreshing drinks and snacks to sunbathers on enticingly comfortable beach beds. Meanwhile, children can play in the shallow, warm waters of the Aegean Sea under the watchful eye of lifeguards. A genius Babewatch service – which has trained staff dedicated to looking after little ones on the shore – allows parents to fully relax. And should you tire of the azure waters and impossibly soft sand, the luxuriously renovated Sani Beach Hotel beckons with its impressive facilities. Exciting restaurants and bars jostle for your attention, while a fully equipped spa will lull you into a state of utter serenity. All the main swimming pools are now temptingly heated. Bliss!

Little ones will be kept amused from sunrise to sunset with the arrival of a new mini club

The introduction of two-bedroom, beachfront Family Suites is ideal for those travelling with small children. With spacious separate living areas and private terraces or balconies, they are ideal for larger families, while the beautiful Panorama Junior Suites – which offer spectacular views over the Aegean – are perfect for smaller families. Little ones will be kept amused from sunrise to sunset with the arrival of a new creche and mini club at Porto Sani Village. Sani Resort – the last word in luxury.

ABOVE: SANI RESORT BEACH. *BELOW:* SANI BEACH HOTEL INFINITY POOL.

Sani Asterias Suites

TATLER OFFER

Sani Resort is offering *Tatler* readers up to 20% off accommodation bookings made before 15 February 2015, including complimentary airport transfers and the Babewatch service on the beach.

To book, visit saniresort.com/tatler15 call 0800 949 6809 or email crs@saniresort.gr

SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY

SANTA MARINA RESORT & VILLAS

MYKONOS, GREECE

The Santa Marina Resort is a touchy-feely sort of place. Wonky sinks carved from tree trunks, shower walls of black pebbles, strokeable leather trunk chests, bleached coral on walls... very tactile, very beautiful. But also solid and substantial, so grubby mitts can't do too much damage. The hotel's heartbeat is the beach, a safe haven for splashy small fry. They'll be busy making new friends while you collapse with a sigh and a choco martini and stare out at the island of Delos shimmering in the distance, or lose yourself in the Lotus Spa. The breezy-cool new Bayview restaurant does sushi, sashimi and a black cod dish to make Nobu Matsuhisa choke on a fish bone.

BOOK IT CLASSIC COLLECTION HOLIDAYS (CLASSIC-COLLECTION.CO.UK; 0800 294 9318) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £1,350, INCLUDING FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND BREAKFAST.

BRING THE BUCKETS & SPADES

Stuff your little nipper into this snappy Sunuva lobster floatsuit, £42. If only it came in adult sizes. sunuva.com

ONE&ONLY THE PALM

DUBAI, UAE

There's a word that crops up again and again when you mention Dubai. It's easy. So very easy. And easy is important when you've got kids. The One&Only takes easy, dresses it in sequins and gives it jazz hands. It's one of those rare combinations – proper child-friendliness, but no primary colours, no plastic, no stickiness. There's every kind of food, and beaches, and fabulous service. The pool is the best in Dubai, with great shallow spots for small people to play in. The suites and villas are vast, just a few sandy steps from the beach. There's a kids' club and an ESPA spa, and various restaurants where they *actually* seem to like children. Or book a babysitter and stuff yourself silly in the absurdly smart Stay restaurant. Easy.

BOOK IT SCOTT DUNN (SCOTTDUNN.COM; 020 8682 5075) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS FROM £2,305, INCLUDING BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND BREAKFAST.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

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TATLER
AWARD WINNER
OUT OF THIS WORLD

HOANIB SKELETON COAST CAMP

NAMIB DESERT, NAMIBIA

Natural habitat The look is Sydney Opera House meets Dalí on Mars. Eight dune-like tents are dotted between gargantuan granite peaks in the deepest, darkest Namib Desert.

Nocturnal activity This is killer design in the desert. The tents have rainforest showers, smooth concrete floors, his-and-hers wardrobes and an exterior sit-and-stare area. From the glass-fronted bedroom, take in surreal views in ear-ringing silence (no hope of a mobile signal here).

Grrr factor Namibia is more about the crazy landscapes than the animals, but you'll spot herds of oryx, towers of giraffe, parades of elephant and zeals of zebra.

Distinctive markings Strap yourself into one of two squishy seats on the roof of the retro-fitted safari vehicle for the wildest game drive EVER.

Grazing Start with a full English, move on to a picnic lunch of BBQ chicken and pasta salad and finish up with an afternoon tea of exquisitely evil cakes. In the evening, it's all about the kudu steak and artichoke salad, washed down with crisp South African wines. After supper, wrap up in one of the striped shawls to be found on the back of every chair and gather round the fire pit to sip Amarula (creamy, boozy, yummy) and track the shooting stars.

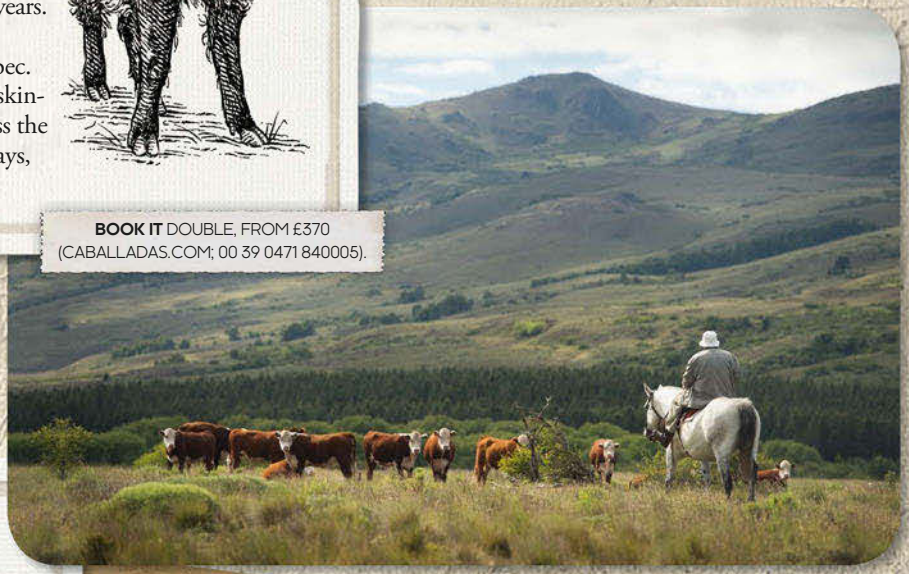
Leader of the pack Do not miss the trip to the Skeleton Coast. Most guests fly, but for a proper adventure take the three-hour, cross-country drive along dusty, bumpy tracks, through parched riverbeds and over golden dunes to the Atlantic Ocean. By the time you return to camp, you'll have earned yourself an extra-large nightcap. ▷

BOOK IT AFRICA TRAVEL (AFRICATRAVEL.CO.UK; 020 7843 3580) OFFERS FOUR NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £3,220, INCLUDING BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS, ACTIVITIES AND EXCURSIONS.

CABALLADAS PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

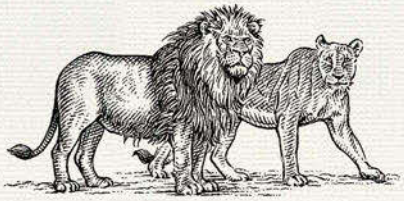
Natural habitat 50,000 acres of glorious fields, forests and snow-capped volcanoes, all of which have been in the hands of one of Argentina's oldest families, the Lagos Mármols, for more than a century.
Nocturnal activity The 10-bedroom Casa Grande still feels like a (terrifically smart) family home: open fires, hot baths and soft beds.
Grrr factor Wild boar, red deer and puma (although you might only see their paw prints).
Distinctive markings The space – where else can you hack for 10 hours in one direction without leaving home turf?
Grazing Cook Alicia has been feeding the family for 20 years. Expect cut-with-a-spoon steak and homemade bread and endless supplies of that Argentinian essential, malbec.
Leader of the pack Days are spent sinking into sheepskin-topped saddles on one of the 60 horses, galloping across the Patagonian wilderness and pretending, just for a few days, to be a wild-haired Argentinian.

Chuck out the binos; dump the zoom lens – what you *really* need on safari is this nifty handmade Hendrick's travel case. It's gin o'clock all day. Hendrick's gin with travel case, £795, harrods.com



BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £370 (CABALLADAS.COM; 00 39 0471 840005).

RICHARD'S RIVER CAMP
MASAI MARA, KENYA



Natural habitat Owner and Mara royalty Richard Roberts used to camp in this location as a boy, so he knows it's the absolute tip-top spot for posh fly-camping: seven canvas tents overlooking a soporific hippo pool.
Nocturnal activity The accommodation is kitted out by Richard's wife Liz with bits and bobs from their travels: Indian block-print cottons, silver-fringed Moroccan throws and intricately carved woodwork.
Grrr factor Watch out for the resident lion pride that hunts right in front of the camp and can be heard roaring long into the night.
Distinctive markings If you're lucky, Richard might take you up in his Cessna, zooming over the galloping herds of the great migration. All that's missing is a wistful-looking Robert Redford...
Grazing Everything comes fresh from a charcoal oven – you'll dream about the juicy Florentine steak for months.
Leader of the pack Top up day and night game drives with bush walks and visits to the nearby Masai village.

BOOK IT NATURAL WORLD SAFARIS (NATURALWORLDSAFARIS.COM; 01273 691642) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £4,350, INCLUDING TRANSFERS AND ACTIVITIES.

ILLUSTRATIONS: DAVID HOPKINS @ PHOSPHOR ART. PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

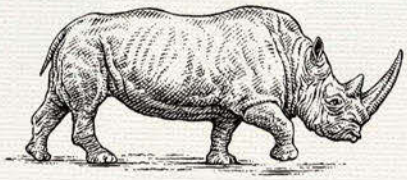
MWIBA LODGE SERENGETI, TANZANIA

Natural habitat This new Texan-owned lodge feels like stepping into a friend's holiday home – a friend with the very best taste (and buckets of cash). Eight airy tents up on stilts, refreshingly anti-bling and with riverine views from every balcony.
Nocturnal activity Air-conditioning is as silent as a leopard in the grass, while cashmere throws and skin-covered chairs impart the heft of old-fashioned class.
Grrr factor Peer down on lion, zebra and wildebeest as they come to drink at the waterholes below your tent. Experienced safari-goers won't get bored.
Distinctive markings This truly exclusive lodge is set in 126,000 acres of private land; you won't see a non-Mwiba soul the entire time you're there.
Grazing Wine is big here, so expect your impeccable beef carpaccio to be paired with the perfect merlot.
Leader of the pack Guides are super-polished and really know how to keep you safe. Visit during the migration months between December and March.

BOOK IT JOURNEYS BY DESIGN (JOURNEYSBYDESIGN.COM; 01273 623790) OFFERS EIGHT NIGHTS, ALL INCLUSIVE, FROM £5,860, INCLUDING TRANSFERS.

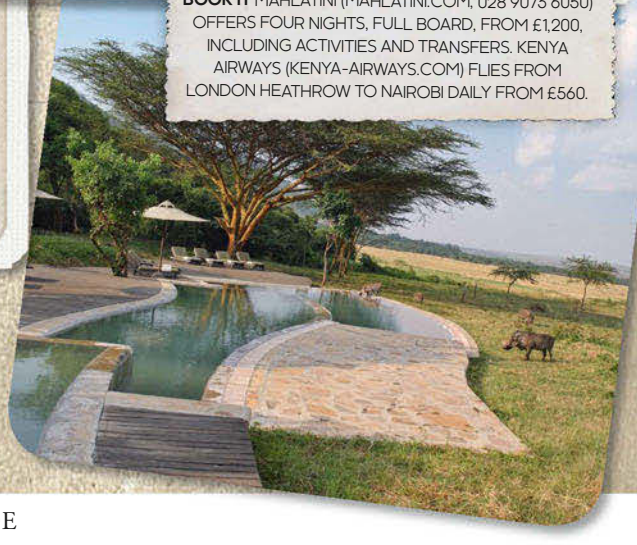
SANDIBE OKAVANGO, THE CLEVEREST NEW LODGE IN BOTSWANA, IS DESIGNED TO LOOK LIKE A CURLED-UP PANGOLIN, WITH CARBON-NEUTRAL ROOMS BASED ON GOLDEN WEAVER NESTS. THE WILDLIFE AIN'T HALF BAD EITHER – THE OKAVANGO DELTA IS ON YOUR DOORSTEP. EXPLORE BY CANOE OR, IF YOU'RE FEELING FANCY, HELICOPTER. (ANDBEYOND.COM)

KICHWA TEMBO MASAI MARA, KENYA

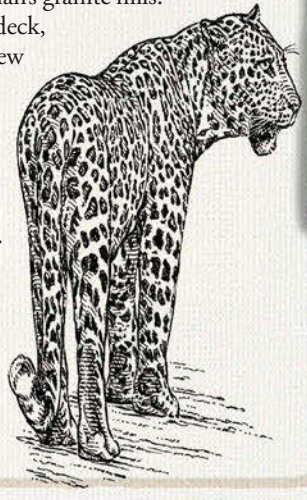


Natural habitat Peering over the Masai Mara, this contemporary-design camp has views, privacy and warthogs a go-go. The new lodge is fresh but chic – think OKA on safari.
Nocturnal activity A hippo-sized bed, loo with a view – and your own butler. This is not a normal tent.
Grrr factor Lion, cheetah and rhino – they're all here, popping up like clockwork. Come in autumn to see two million wildebeest migrate from the Serengeti National Park, across the Mara River, to the Masai Mara.
Distinctive markings Hot chocolate in bed, followed by gliding above the Serengeti in a hot-air balloon, makes getting up at 5am bearable.
Grazing Pick fresh limes and avocados from chef George's garden, or just turn up for his buffets of guacamole, baba ghannouj and lamb tagine.
Leader of the pack With Joseph as your guide, you could stay out in the bush all day. Make time for an Africology massage by the river: the sound of thundering water helps you forget about the crocodiles. ▷

BOOK IT MAHLATINI (MAHLATINI.COM; 028 9073 6050) OFFERS FOUR NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £1,200, INCLUDING ACTIVITIES AND TRANSFERS. KENYA AIRWAYS (KENYA-AIRWAYS.COM) FLIES FROM LONDON HEATHROW TO NAIROBI DAILY FROM £560.



JAWAI LEOPARD CAMP RAJASTHAN, INDIA

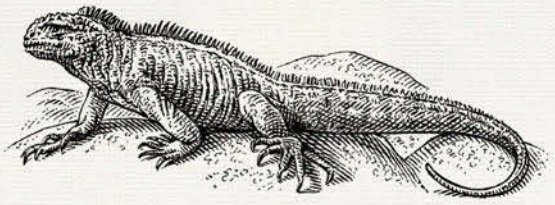


Natural habitat Slap bang in the middle of India's dustiest plains are 10 pristine, white-canvas tents, ringed by Rajasthan's granite hills.
Nocturnal activity Each tent has its own private deck, beds big enough to take the whole camp (and a few leopards) and beefy power showers.
Grrr factor Dawn and dusk safaris offer glimpses of leopard, accompanied by the eerie screeches of local peacocks and langur monkeys.
Distinctive markings Heat getting to you? Jump into the glittering infinity pool for a few brisk laps.
Grazing Evening drinks are taken around a fire and supper is under the stars, lit by candles.
Leader of the pack The camp's driver-tracker will drag you out of bed and onto a jeep before the sun is up, and the on-board naturalist will introduce you to the Rabari herdsmen, resplendent in their red turbans.

BOOK IT WILD FRONTIERS (WILDFRONTIERSTRAVEL.CO.UK; 020 7736 3968) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £3,450, INCLUDING FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

PIKAIA LODGE

SANTA CRUZ, THE GALAPAGOS



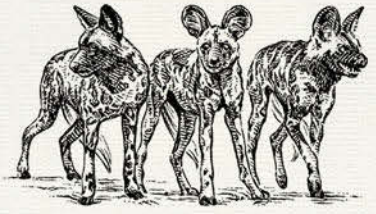
Natural habitat Wildlife boffins rejoice! Now you can visit the Galapagos without being stuck on a boat, so you can 'do' the archipelago with a supersized, super-soft bed to collapse into each night.
Nocturnal activity A shrine to beautiful, sustainable modernism, with14 monochrome rooms featuring marble bathrooms and vast, glass walls that bring the wild volcanic landscape right to the foot of your bed.
Grrr factor Pink flamingo? Check. Blue-footed booby, frigate bird, Galapagos penguin, sea lion, marine iguana, giant tortoise... check, check, check.
Distinctive markings Whizz to all the main sites on a 100ft yacht. You'll have your own stateroom to snooze or shower off in after kayaking, snorkelling and hiking, followed by a talk from one of the charming guides.
Grazing Evolution restaurant is strong on stuff they've hauled in from the sea – moreish octopus carpaccio, say.
Leader of the pack Paulina is as clever and chatty-chatty as they come, merrily explaining the origin of species.

BOOK IT JOURNEY LATIN AMERICA (JOURNEYLATINAMERICA.CO.UK; 020 8622 8444) OFFERS SIX NIGHTS, HALF BOARD, AS PART OF AN EIGHT-NIGHT TRIP, FROM £4,985, INCLUDING FLIGHTS AND TRANSFERS.

BOOK IT CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK) OFFERS THREE NIGHTS, FULL BOARD, FROM £2,685, INCLUDING TRANSFERS AND ACTIVITIES.

SINGITA BOULDERS LODGE

SABI SAND RESERVE, SOUTH AFRICA



Natural habitat Spread along the banks of the Sand River, this lodge is ethnic chic to the max: rough-stone walls, animal-hide rugs, wafty fabrics and scatter cushions.
Nocturnal activity Each set of guest rooms is bigger than your average Mayfair pad, with four-poster beds, his-and-hers sinks and plunge pools.
Grrr factor They have a knack for getting the big five – lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard and rhinoceros – to appear as if on command, but the real triumph is spotting the ever-elusive wild dog.
Distinctive markings Head to the Bush Spa for its utterly zonk-out-worthy Monkey Orange massage.
Grazing You'll eat not once, not twice but SIX times a day. Expect lots of exotic game meat. And weight gain.
Leader of the pack There are daily bumpity-bumps out into the bush with personal guides, as well as romantic starlit night safaris. If you're bored (what is WRONG with you?), you can swap four wheels for a spot of mountain-biking or archery.

ILLUSTRATIONS: DAVID HOPKINS @ PHOSPHOR ART. PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK

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SCENE STEALERS

Cool cats we've got the hots for

MISS CLARA STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Ever wondered where those ultra-chic Stockholm types – the ones with pale skin and paler hair and perfectly asymmetrical outfits – hang out? They're here. Probably with Tilda Swinton. Miss Clara, an old girls' school, applies a headmistress's sense of order to a minimalist-cool art-deco design. Elegant high ceilings, hushed lighting and neat-as-a-pin staff bring just the right amount of Ingrid Bergman grace. With dark-wood floorboards, strict leather details and oversized windows allowing the crystalline Swedish light to pour on in, the rooms are perfect for not doing your homework. Scoot down the original 1910 staircase for a Blood & Sand cocktail, then into the restaurant for a plate of toast Skagen (shrimps in dill and mayonnaise on butter-fried rye bread) or herring with olive oil and lemon. Bedtime can be whenever – Miss Clara has spoken.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £140 (MISSCLARAHOTEL.COM; 00 46 8 440 67 00). NORWEGIAN FLIES DAILY FROM LONDON GATWICK TO STOCKHOLM FROM £68 (NORWEGIAN.COM).

1888 HOTEL SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Sydney hotels tend to be either stodgy behemoths or a bit Boutique Try Hard. So a big g'day to this cheeky charmer in dockside Pyrmont, elegantly carved out of a listed one-time wool warehouse dating from... guess when? It's very industrial Victoriana – iron-and-timber beams, bare bricks, giant hoists – coolly counterpointed with trippy artwork, retro-y furniture, eff-off-huge flatscreens and iPads galore. It's groovy but grown-up, fashiony but friendly. And rather frolicsome too. Top choice is the two-level, let's-whoop-it-up Williamson Suite, with its own bar, tub big enough for 10 and private entrance. And for those whose egos need a stroke, there's a giant digital-picture frame in the lobby – stand behind it, snap a selfie and gaze at yourself gurning down from the wall. It's a scene.

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £95 (1888HOTEL.COM.AU; 00 61 2 8586 1888). QANTAS FLIES DAILY FROM LONDON HEATHROW TO SYDNEY FROM £1,020 (QANTAS.COM).

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £125 (ACEHOTEL.COM; 00 507 211 2000).

AMERICAN TRADE HOTEL PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

Foreign money may be flowing into Panama's skyscraper-filled downtown faster than water through that canal (it turned the big 100 in 2014, dontcha know), but the smart visitors know the Casco Viejo (old town) is where it's at. Here, amid the French-influenced architecture, moody bars and crumbling mansions, you could be in Havana or New Orleans. And now the area has its first truly sexy place to stay, the 50-room American Trade Hotel. Set up by those clever chaps behind the Ace brand, it's housed in one of the neighourhood's most beautiful buildings, which has served as a department store, an apartment block and even a local gang hangout. Rooms have reclaimed hardwood floors and kaleidoscopically tiled bathrooms – nab a corner suite for the best views of the city. There's a rooftop pool, a farm-to-table restaurant and a well-stocked library. And when the sun sets, you can slink off to the hotel's jazz club and spend a few dreamy hours with Panama's heppest guys 'n' gals.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK, DESIGNHOTELS.COM, ATELIER ACE BY SPENCER LOWELL

SAY HOLA TO **W HOTELS**' MOST RECENT OPENING IN COLOMBIA'S CAPITAL, BOGOTA. DESIGNED BY NEW YORK-BASED STUDIO GAIA AND INSPIRED BY THE FAMOUS EL DORADO LEGEND, THE 168 ROOMS ARE GOLD-TASTIC. GOLD CUSHIONS, GOLD MOSAIC, GOLD TABLES... YOU GET THE PICTURE. (WHOTELS.COM)

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £200 (LUDLOWHOTEL.COM; 001 212 432 1818).

THE LUDLOW NEW YORK, USA

If the Ludlow is like a secret Narnia porthole that magically reveals where all the hip people hang out, then its creator, Sean MacPherson, is Aslan. We love his hotels. He did it with the Bowery, and the Jane and the Marlton, and now he's done it here, in the gritty, slightly grubby Lower East Side. Where he goes, the beautiful people go. You'll find them scrunching together on the lobby's serpentine leather sofa for daytime powwows and night-time cinnamon Gimlets. You'll see them in the always-rammed restaurant Dirty French (even the name is cool) – THE hottest table in Manhattan right now, shouting and laughing and wolfing down duck à l'orange and saucisson with Creole relish. You'll find them squirrelling away in the rooms – on the small side, but with four-posters and floor-to-ceiling casement windows and drop-your-iPad views of downtown from the higher floors. Aslan's done it again.

Ay caramba! This pint-sized Piñata Pouch, £855, will come in handy for all your party knick-knacks. Pass the tequila, pronto. charlotteolympia.com

ACE HOTEL DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES LOS ANGELES, USA

The setting: the restored 1927 United Artists building. The theme: silver-screen monochrome – chequered tiles, shiny black wood and slouchy Hollywood types slumming it (downtown might have a scene these days, but it's still a bit mucky). Rooms are vintage Ace – pared-back geek chic and mid-century furniture – with signature vinyl collections, in-room turntables, Martin guitars and blank sheet music for late-night creative moments that won't ever see the light of day (thank heavens). Food is as fuss free as the decor: cleansing juices in Moon Juice in the lobby and brasserie staples in LA Chapter. Down below is the vast, flamboyant old movie theatre, now host to film events and gigs. Up top is a rooftop *Road to Morocco*-like oasis, with old-fashioned movie-set lights and the kind of splash pool made for a tipsy starlet dressed in white. Lights, camera aaand ACTION!

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £125 (ACEHOTEL.COM; 00 1213 623 3233).

BOOK IT DOUBLE, FROM £150 (SOHOHOUSECHICAGO.COM; 001 312 521 8000). VIRGIN ATLANTIC FLIES SEASONALLY FROM LONDON HEATHROW TO CHICAGO FROM £750 (VIRGINATLANTIC.COM).

SOHO HOUSE CHICAGO CHICAGO, USA

Don't even think about staying at Chicago's new outpost of Soho House unless you have a MacBook Air or an iPad. You will need it to fit in around the vast rooftop pool, lounging among Chicagoan hipsters in Ray-Bans and plaid shirts. Nick Jones's latest creation is slap-bang in the middle of the city's meatpacking district and has 40 bare-brick, signature-cool bedrooms. You may struggle to leave your room at first, because the baths are nearly as big as the pool, the bathrooms are stocked with GIANT bottles of Cowshed goodies and the beds are large enough for several hipsters at once. But try, because the hotel also has four different hipster restaurants to gorge in (charred carrot hummus? Burger with porchetta? Fried chicken and truffle fries?); a hipster gym complete with an old-school boxing ring and retro skipping ropes; a hipster screening room where they show art-house films; and a Cowshed spa for when you're exhausted by being a hipster and quite fancy a little lie-down. Just remember that iPad.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK, ATELIER ACE BY SPENCER LOWELL

Where TO SCORE THE HOT FOR

YES

WHAT SWEEPS YOU OFF YOUR SKIS?

SPY-CLASS THRILLS

LE GRAND BELLEVUE
Gstaad, Switzerland

The chocolate-box resort of Gstaad is full of stübli and cuckoo clocks – and people who look like Bond villains. There are so many, in fact, it seems fitting that Le Grand Bellevue picks up guests in a vintage Bentley that once belonged to resort-regular Sir Roger Moore. It's the Bellevue's one nod to Gstaad's old-school rep. The hotel has come over all young and groovy – a welcome change from the town's frou-frou palace hotels. The newly spruced rooms are more Soho House than Ritz palatial, with duck egg-blue walls, soft velvet upholstery, smashing mountain views and Bamford products. Evenings are spent sipping martinis in the bar or tucking into osso bucco in Michelin-starred Leonard's. A visit to the mega-spa will sort out any skiing injuries – though, the thing is, no one *really* skis in Gstaad. So the piste is all yours, and not a Bond henchman in sight.

BOOK IT Double, from £400, half-board (bellevue-gstaad.ch; 00 41 33 748 0000). Swiss (swiss.com) flies from London to Geneva from £79. Visit myswitzerland.com for rail transfers and further information.

SIZE – IT MATTERS

THE CHEDI
Andermatt, Switzerland

The Chedi group doesn't do small. Take its new venture in the Swiss Alps. It's a whopping great cathedral of local oak and cool grey granite – with suites that have floor-to-ceiling wine cabinets, 20-foot-long sofas and Reubens-inspired murals. The main restaurant has not one, not two but FOUR open kitchens, as well as a Japanese sushi, sashimi and tempura bar. There's a wine and cigar room, a humungous spa and ski butlers to cater to your every need. Andermatt was once popular with the Brits, but they drifted off to France in the Seventies to be replaced by hearty Scandinavians who still careen off-piste and are easy on the eye in their all-in-ones. So, to sum up, the Chedi is a blend of Swiss efficiency with a sprinkling of Colorado, a light dusting of Asia and a soupçon of Stockholm on ice. Got that? Good.

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PLAYING IT COOL

W VERBIER
Verbier, Switzerland

Sassy salopettes at the ready: the inaugural W ski hotel has opened in Verbier, to the chagrin of hardened local off-pisters and the delight of global ski-loving W fans. In position A right at the base of the main gondola in town, it looks from the outside like a bunch of interconnected timber chalets, but inside it's more clubby than cosy. The main bar has walls of crazy lithograph mountain topography, filament-bulb lamps and modular booth seating. Rooms are just as cool, with bathroom walls of red glass and hanging clusters of hand-blown Bocci glass spheres. Make sure you slope off to the spa, decked out in 50 shades of grey (literally); then sip Roederer rosé with the pretty people by the indoor-outdoor pool. At Arola, the Franco-Spanish meets Swiss Alps restaurant, we loved the Ibérico carpaccio and the oxtail ravioli with foie gras. The sexy goth-vamp art may feel a little odd with your bircher muesli, but it's wonderfully naughty at night.

BOOK IT Camel Snow (camelsnow.com; 020 8123 2859) offers seven nights from £3,200, including flights, transfers and breakfast.

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK. *TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

to go... BEST SLOPES

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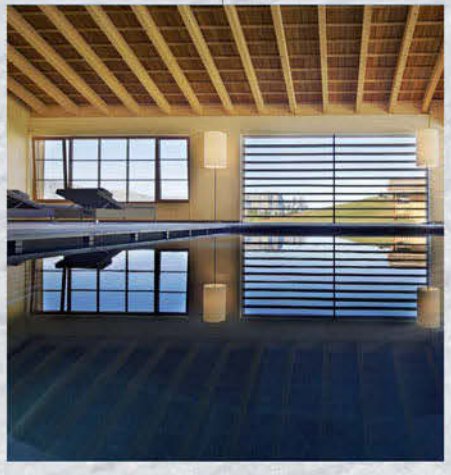
BUT YOU REALLY FANCY...

A GOOD-LOOKING ITALIAN



ADLER MOUNTAIN LODGE
South Tyrol, Italy

You arrive by cable car at the peak overlooking Ortisei ski resort, your suitcases are whisked away and you're encouraged to ski (or walk) the final stretch. And you do – it would be rude not to, given that you're staying in a Unesco World Heritage Site. The Italian Dolomites are the stars of the show, but this dreamy new 30-room property is no shrinking violet. It's a towering spruce-wood lodge with an expansive sun terrace and a wildly Instagrammable infinity pool. Inside, there's not a smidgen of Alpine twee, but a stylish collection of Scandi-chic furniture and soft animal skins. South Tyrol has a ridiculously high count of Michelin stars and the Adler chef is clearly gunning for one – think roe-deer goulash and tarte Tatin with peanut butter ice-cream. This lodge does contemporary at its best, wearing its Alpine tradition lightly, and only when it knows it looks ravishing in it.

BOOK IT Original Travel (originaltravel.co.uk; 020 3582 4990) offers seven nights, full board, from £2,815, including British Airways flights and transfers.

SOME RUGGED ROCKIES ACTION

GOTHICS LODGE
British Columbia, Canada

Are you a hardcore ski junkie? Interested in nothing but the purest virgin snow (and the world's best bragging rights)? We've found your holy grail. A short helicopter hop from Banff into the remote Canadian Rockies and you've arrived at the actual birthplace of heli-skiing (and one of Sir Richard Branson's favourite spots). Gothics Lodge, part of Canadian Mountain Holidays, has had a cool refurb, although fancy it ain't – bedrooms are cosy, dining is communal. But the lodge is not really the point. You're here for one thing only: the snow. So it's up at the crack of dawn and off in a chopper to be dropped down the untouched abysses with your own private guide. And then, when you're all skied out (you won't be, because you're a ski junkie), there's an outdoor hot tub, pool tables and an overstocked wine cellar to get stuck into with your fellow hedgie and hipster ski fiends. Let the bragging begin...

BOOK IT Pure Powder (purepowder.com; 020 7736 8191) offers three nights, full board, from £1,805, including two and a half days of heli-skiing.

SOMETHING SUAVE AND FRENCH

L'APOGEE
Courchevel, France

If money talks and wealth whispers, then L'Apogée positively mimes. The first Alpine addition to the Oetker Collection is a bells-and-whistles beauty crowning Le Jardin Alpin in Courchevel 1850. This is the kind of place you'd go to drink a dirty martini with Jon Hamm: polished walnut furniture, dark-green leather and ultra-low lighting. The Oetker service is out in full force, so your ski boots are spritzed with scent in the morning then strapped to your feet so you don't have to move a muscle until you depart via the ski-in, ski-out facility. The rooms are cosy, with plaid carpets, wood panelling and thick fur throws to snuggle under. But the real star is the Le Comptoir restaurant – two staircases descend to a circular bar lit by a glowing chandelier, as wines rest in a large display case on one side, cheeses to the other and a ham-ageing glass cellar takes moody centre stage. Jon says he'll meet you there at 8pm.

BOOK IT Scott Dunn (scottdunn.com; 020 8682 5050) offers seven nights, half-board, from £3,095, including British Airways flights and transfers.

DIFFERENT STROKES

High culture, hot hotels, happening restaurants – here's how to do Hong Kong's art scene in a day

1 WAKE UP IN...

Your very zen, very smooth, very strokeable room in the **Upper House**, Hong Kong's coolest address. Trip upstairs for shiitake and spinach omelettes and slap-your-face views over Hong Kong Island. **BOOK IT** DOUBLE, FROM £355 (UPPERHOUSE.COM; 00 852 3968 1111)

Pressed Flowers by Ron Arad, at Ben Brown Fine Arts

2 PUT ON...

Sensible shoes. It's time to hit the galleries – the best are in Central. First stop, **12 Pedder Street**, which is filled with excellent names, including Hanart TZ, Gagosian, Ben Brown, Pearl Lam, Simon Lee and Lehmann Maupin. Chinese ink is very hot right now (Wenda Gu's drawings are a good investment). You'll find more at nearby **Edouard Malingue Gallery** on Queen's Road, **Grotto** on Wyndham Street or **White Cube** on Connaught Street.

3 EAT AT...

The **Grill + Bar** at the Mandarin Oriental. Hong Kong's grande dame has all sorts of fancy places to eat (and nice rooms and a whopping great spa to get lost in), but top pick around Art Basel time in March is its 'art menu', which includes yummy creations such as 'Paint' (you get to decorate your plate with things like spinach, red pepper and, um, steak).

NEW CRUSH

Folding is so last year. Scrunch this Crumpled City Map, £9, up and play catch. Or just navigate the world's best cities. palomarweb.com

4 TRUFFLE OUT...

More Chinese contemporary art at the **Asia Society Hong Kong** (fabulous building, even better exhibitions) or the brand-new **PMQ** buildings – the old Police Married Quarters, transformed into groovy boutiques, studios and pop-ups. All very Shoreditch. Then visit the new **Liang Yi Museum** on Hollywood Road, an eccentric billionaire's private collection of priceless Chinese antiques.

5 BE A TOURIST...

On the **Star Ferry**. Bob across the bay, snap pics of the crazy skyline and go 'ooooh' and 'aaaah' at the gorgeous old junks floating past.

6 TAKE A TIPPLE...

At the W Hotel. You're in Kowloon now, and the **Woobar** has a thumping scene and views over the sprouting West Kowloon Cultural District development. The project is under the reins of Michael Lynch, who chivvied up the Southbank Centre; the highlight will be the M+ modern art museum, due to open in 2018.

7 BACK TO...

Central, for dinner at **Duddell's**, a new gallery/swanky restaurant hybrid, designed by Ilse Crawford. Scoff braised scallop with minced shrimp while talking loudly about the hipster artist studios springing up in old factories in the New Territories. You'll look like a real insider. Promise.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC (VIRGIN-ATLANTIC.COM) FLIES FROM HEATHROW TO HONG KONG DAILY, FROM £670. VISIT DISCOVERHONGKONG.COM AND HK-AGA.ORG FOR INFORMATION

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, MICHAEL WEBER PHOTOGRAPHY, SHUTTERSTOCK

TAILORED TRAVEL

From exotic island retreats to snowy mountain adventures, Carrier always goes the extra mile – upping the ante in luxury travel

If you long for a grand expedition but shy away from the thought of planning it, if you crave stress-banishing indulgence and want a trip that's unique to you, look no further than Carrier. With over 30 years' experience in turning peoples' travel dreams into reality, this bespoke-holiday specialist knows what good memories are made of. Snow sled with huskies? Helicopter over the Grand Canyon? Private yacht in the Caribbean? All this and more falls under Carrier's remit – with experts tirelessly hunting down cool new spots and uncovering hidden gems. In the past year alone, its staff has taken over 60 trips – meticulously checking standards to ensure its featured hotels are among the finest in the world. All you have to think about is where you want to go. And, should even *that* overwhelm you, Carrier's award-winning website will provide a bounty of inspiration, while dedicated representatives are on hand to discuss your ideas over the phone. You'll only have one point of contact with Carrier. No more being passed around from person to person, repeating yourself at every turn.This is accessible, attentive service – creating a carefree sense of holiday from the moment you start to plan. What's more, the Carrier name is trusted and respected in the travel industry – it is a name which can help you secure even the most challenging requests, and gain access to venues in high demand. The concierge service attends to your every whim, bringing you incredible experiences for a one-of-a-kind, unforgettable holiday. That's 'yes' to dune bashing, 'yes' to private shopping guides and 'yes' to VIP concerts. Let Carrier introduce you to a whole new level of service...

GoldenEye, Jamaica

Dog-sledding in the Yukon, Canada

SANCTUARY STANLEY'S CAMP, BOTSWANA

ISLAND ESCAPES

Seas are an endless blue, beaches have the softest sand. This is what escapism looks like

CONRAD MALDIVES RANGALI ISLAND

CONRAD MALDIVES RANGALI ISLAND

Paradise does exist. That daydream image of tropical white sandy beaches, cloudless skies and turquoise waters is brought vividly to life in two of Carrier's quintessential island escapes – Barbados and the Maldives. You'll also find a slice of heaven in other Caribbean islands, where Carrier's pick of hotels is unparalleled. These locations bring five-star luxury to the castaway idyll.

BARBADOS

Wake to the gentle lapping of the water, the buzzing and chirruping of the lush green gardens all around you. Here is a silence punctuated only by the tell-tale sounds of the tropics. Bliss. Coral Reef Club is one of the most exclusive hotels, not just in Barbados, but in the whole of the Caribbean. It sits on 12 acres of sprawling gardens overlooking the sea and offers exquisite plantation-style suites with wrap-around terraces and private plunge pools. In typical island style, this is luxury with a laidback spirit. All the trappings of grandeur, none of the stuffiness. Take to the water for a spot of windsurfing or snorkelling (all complimentary), indulge in complete inactivity in one of the shaded cabanas or explore nearby Bridgetown. The capital city offers a wealth of fun cocktail bars and dancing spots. A delicious mix of classic French cuisine and Caribbean spices awaits you in the restaurant – designed to satisfy appetites after a hard day's relaxation. While the spa will buff and prod you into a state of ultimate serenity with its naturally sourced products. Island time is so chilled, you'll never want to leave.

CORAL REEF CLUB, BARBADOS

MALDIVES

Like a mini lost Atlantis rising from the waves, Rangali island in the Maldives welcomes its visitors with naturally crafted, luxurious quarters. Conrad Maldives Rangali Island blends seamlessly into this Blue Lagoon-esque setting with its bright, airy accommodation. White washed walls, wooden accents and infinity pools create a feeling of space – the spa itself boasts glass-floored treatment rooms set above a coral reef. Here, you can enjoy a range of therapies and holistic classes. Why not try a regenerating collagen mask as you gaze at the colourful fish swirling below? To feast your eyes on even more dazzling underwater scenes, head to Ithaa Undersea Restaurant. It sits five metres below the surface, offering a mesmerising, panoramic view of the ocean. Ever snorkelled with a whale shark? Kayaked with manta rays? This is barefoot luxury at its finest, with an array of unique leisure and water sports on your doorstep.

ST BARTHS

Nestled right on the Baie des Flamands beach (reputed to be St Barth's most beautiful) and with just 39 rooms, Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France feels like an intimate hideaway. Here, you can savour the vista of crystal clear waters from a perfectly placed sunlounger, or get more active with a spot of sailing or snorkelling in the bay. The restaurant, La Case de l'Isle, rustles up delicious seafood with a French twist – perfect sustenance for a day on the briny. What's more, guests may enjoy an in-room dinner in the intimacy of their private terrace or garden, with a bespoke menu specially tailored by the chef. Delightful.

CHEVAL BLANC ST-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE, ST BARTHS

★SKY HIGH

•From December 2014, there will be two daily Emirates A380 flights to Mauritius meaning there will be twice as many Business Class seats into the island.

•As of 29 March 2015, the Turks and Caicos British Airways flight will go via Antigua which means that the number of business class seats into the islands has nearly tripled in number.

★NEW OPENINGS

The Seychelles is continuing to grow in popularity, with both Shangri-La and Six Senses set to open hotels in 2015.

GOLDENEYE, JAMAICA

THE COTTON HOUSE, MUSTIQUE

JAMAICA

GoldenEye, in Jamaica's Oracabessa Bay, is a hidden gem right by the Caribbean Sea. Arriving here feels like stepping into a private home, and with good reason. The property belonged to Ian Fleming – he wrote the famous James Bond books in this Caribbean haven. The original villa has been supplemented with an array of chic cottages. Opt for the Lagoon Cottages by the calm turquoise water and enjoy the novelty of kayaking to breakfast or to the spa. The Gazebo restaurant (reached by a swing bridge, of course) offers fine dining in a beautiful setting. Have a drink, (shaken not stirred) in the Bizot bar or head to Toscanini just outside the nearby resort town of Ocho Rios for more dining options. Nobody does it better...

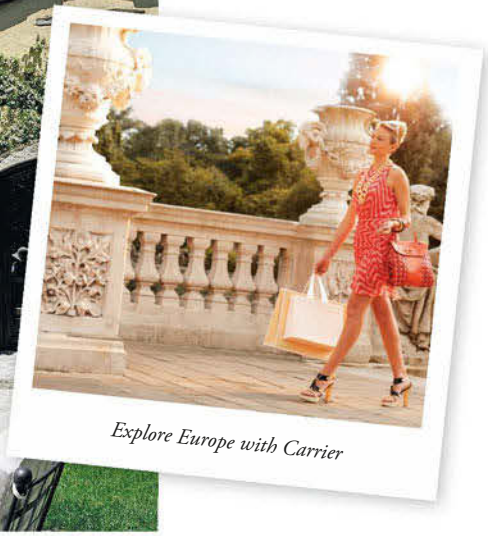
MUSTIQUE

Situated right on the waterfront, The Cotton House in Mustique is a hotel full of old colonial charm. This is an oasis of tranquillity, bringing luxury back to nature with its chic yet relaxed interiors. The views from the rooms will take your breath away! Scuba diving, picnics, barbeques and even horseriding are all on the cards here – 'do as much or as little as you like', the hotel motto reads. Don't miss The Cotton House cocktail party. Thrown every Tuesday, it has become a celebrated staple of the island's social calendar, capturing its inclusive, friendly spirit. Venture further afield to the small town of Britannia Bay for sweet treats in the bakeries and swinging jazz.

THE COTTON HOUSE, MUSTIQUE

CLOSER TO HOME

BELMOND VILLA SAN MICHELE, FLORENCE



The wonderful thing about living in Europe is the huge variety of cultures and landscapes that exist right on ones doorstep. They make ideal destinations for a mini-break. Carrier has a range of 'closer to home' holiday spots in its extensive portfolio – idyllic choices for a luxury getaway.

ITALY

Florence is a cultural mecca – heaving with galleries, museums, sculptures and cathedrals. Stay at the Belmond Villa San Michele which towers above the city, tucked away in the rolling hills. With its vaulted arches and multiple columns, it truly captures the city's romantic spirit. Learn the secrets of Italian cuisine in the cookery school, follow in the footsteps of Hollywood stars with a screen sirens tour or simply recline in the heat of the hotel's gardens with a cocktail (or two). Castiglion Del Bosco outside Montalcino offers a delightful alternative in Tuscany. Here, you can view the vineyards and learn about the process of wine making (while tasting it, of course). Steeped in history and with pastoral countryside stretching as far as the eye can see, this hotel has an instant calming effect. Enjoy a spot of golf, indulge in some pampering at the spa or venture into the nearby town of Montalcino.

AMAN SVETI STEFAN, MONTENEGRO

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro is referred to as the 'pearl of the Mediterranean' and with good reason. Already on Carrier's radar, this luxe destination is primed for a visit. The Aman Sveti Stefan is postcard perfection – with rolling, forested hills right down to the crystal clear water. The resort itself is on an islet. Spend languid days basking on the beach, practising some yoga in the fully equipped spa or sampling the local cuisine in the nearby village. Porto Montenegro is more high octane with a luxury yacht port and marina village. Go here to see and be seen (with or without your own 60-footer).

CHALET ZANNIER, MEGÈVE, FRANCE

LUXURY SKI AND SNOW

Like the idea of a snow holiday but can't (or won't) ski? Carrier caters for everyone.
Get a luxury snow break with a difference and see the Northern Lights of the Yukon in Canada with Carrier's complete six-night itinerary. Expect unspoilt wilderness, dog sledding, ice fishing and one of the best locations to view this natural marvel. For something truly special, visit the Icehotel in Sweden. Or how about a horse safari in Finland? For the traditional skiers, Carrier's offerings include Verbier in Switzerland and Megève in France – incredible skiing, luxurious chalets and unparalleled après ski.

VERBIER, SWITZERLAND

★SKI EXPERIENCES

★The W Verbier brings the 'wow factor' – with chic swimming pool, underground club and modern twists on Swiss cuisine.

★Megève has a charming, old-world feel. The cobbled streets, quaint boutiques and horse-drawn sleighs, sit alongside swish cocktail bars and vibrant jazz clubs.

ICEHOTEL, SWEDEN

MEET THE EXPERTS

BOTSWANA

Everywhere Carrier goes, they have experts with the experience to make your holiday magical. From chefs to gamekeepers, hoteliers to tour guides, Carrier works closely with people on the ground to bring you that little something extra. Unique, insider knowledge – the Carrier way.

RALPH, BOTSWANA

Ralph Bousfield hails from a long line of pioneers and adventurers: his family has guided safaris for four generations. Based in Botswana, Ralph acts as a private guide for you, the Carrier guest. Experience safari through the eyes of an expert. Learn about the unique bushveld ecosystem and the history of the land as you tour the open plains in search of the Big Five! A private guide like Ralph becomes many things on your trip – spotter, tracker, host, storyteller and aide-de-camp, working to make your holiday truly unforgettable.

ANTIGUA

JANET, ANTIGUA

Having worked for Carrier for over a decade, Janet Lewis is familiar with all the ins and outs of luxury travel. Antigua born and bred, Janet knows the island like the back of her hand and all the ingredients that make up a perfect Caribbean holiday. Her favourite spot on the island? English Harbour. The scenery takes her breath away. Janet's favourite part of her job is welcoming back repeat clients year after year – being a friendly face in a friendly place.

CAMBODIA

EMMA, IN-HOUSE CONCIERGE

Carrier offers a dedicated concierge service, designed to enhance your holiday by catering to your every need, want and whim. Emma Cross creates exclusive and unique experiences – these moments are not pulled from a catalogue, but rather tailored to you and your chosen destination. From essential requirements (babysitting, transfers, equipment hire) to magical extras (dune bashing in Dubai, fast-track theme park passes) the concierge service facilitates a seamless, carefree holiday. Join a private tour with Peter Cranley (the local historian and writer) in Shanghai. Enjoy an aperitif with celebrated artist Helen Kling at her art studio in Saigon. Put your holiday in Emma's capable hands and enjoy luxury travel like no other.

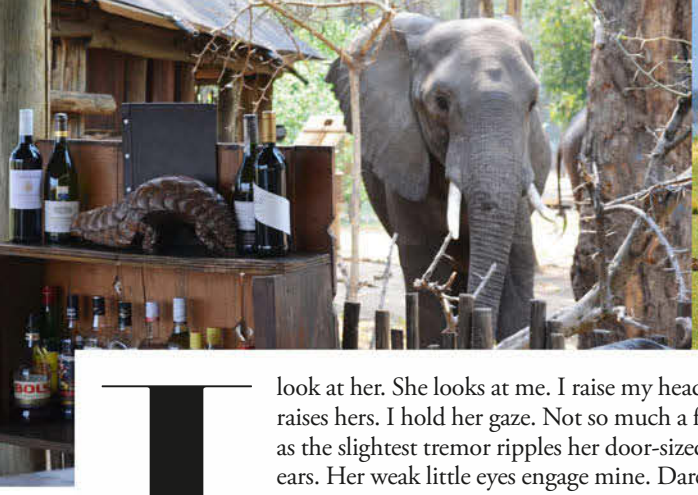
LUXURY STARTS HERE...

For more information on these Carrier destinations or others, visit carrier.co.uk/tatler or call 0161 826 2866

FROM ZIMBABWE, WITH LOVE

When Matthew Parris revisited the Africa of his youth he learnt more about the land, its people and its astonishing creatures than he ever had as a boy

PHOTOGRAPH: ADRIAN BAILEY/AURORA/AXIOM



I look at her. She looks at me. I raise my head, she raises hers. I hold her gaze. Not so much a flapping as the slightest tremor ripples her door-sized grey ears. Her weak little eyes engage mine. Dare I take that shortcut across her path? 'Dare he?' she's thinking. Between us, something clicks: a shared challenge. Let's take this to the brink.

I edge forward. She lunges towards me, tusks gleaming in the African sun. I retreat. I trip. She stops. She's won, knows it and turns aside as I scamper back to my tented palace, heart thumping.

I spot her next morning, supple trunk reaching through a window towards the muesli on the breakfast bar. She catches my eye. 'You again? You – the one who backs off?' Elephants don't forget. Amy comes to the rescue and shoos non-human interlopers away as a disappointed monkey scowls from a convenient branch. Amy's colleague Nono fetches me a coffee. Shall I take it outside by the fire, with a view out over the mile-wide Zambezi river where crocs sunbathe and hippos belch and grunt? Or linger by the outdoor grill where another member of staff is preparing exquisite omelettes to order?

This is a wonderful lodge, in a wonderful national park, in a wonderful country. Why don't we know more about Africa's classiest, safest, friendliest destination? It's time we Brits reclaimed Zimbabwean tourism from the discerning French and the newly invading American rich. It's time we came back to this country we helped shape: the best-educated, kindliest, most English-speaking country in Africa; a place where a glass of sherry greets you after an afternoon game-walk; where you can sink into a big, cast-iron bath made in England 50 years ago; and where the barman answers your request for a whisky and soda not with an uncomprehending stare, but a polite 'Famous Grouse or J&B?'

But I digress. She was back, my elephantine nemesis – or so I thought, as I sat alone in the library tent that night, consulting bird books about the sensational carmine bee-eaters I'd been watching from our canoe on the Zambezi. From the raised wooden boardwalks meant for guests, not elephants, I'd heard the familiar warning creak (often followed by a splintering sound), and turned sharply round, pulse racing.

'Hi, Matthew!' It was an exceptionally large American lady.

I was born in Africa and brought up in Zimbabwe – Rhodesia as it then was – and only came to Britain for university at 19. For 44 years I never returned. From what I'd read in the British press, I'd supposed the place would be in ruins.

And it's true there have been problems, and the politics have been ghastly. But Zimbabwe and its people are so much more than their politics. Chaos threatened but never won. This brave, big-hearted country fought back. The economy has stabilised. The infrastructure – roads, railways, water, electricity, schools, courts, hospitals – is all still there and working: just a bit shabby in places. Crime is low, the streets are safe. There is vigorous debate, and newspapers unafraid to lampoon politicians.

There has always been a tension below the surface in South Africa. There has always been a gentleness about Zimbabwe.

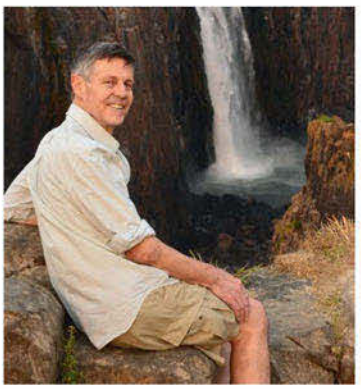
Half a century ago I knew the country as home, not a tourist destination. I was seven before we visited Victoria Falls, one of the world's great sights on our own doorstep, but Dad preferred the seaside. This time we flew straight to Victoria Falls, BA all the way, after an easy overnight flight to Jo'burg.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, AN ELEPHANT EXAMINING THE BAR AT RUCKOMECHI CAMP. ANOTHER BECOMES LUNCH FOR A LION. AFTERNOON TEA IN THE BUSH. MATTHEW TAKES POST-FLIGHT REFRESHMENT ON THE AIRSTRIP AT RUCKOMECHI. MATTHEW AND HIS PARTNER JULIAN CANOEING ON THE ZAMBEZI RIVER. A HIPPO IN MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK. *ABOVE*, GUIDE NYENGE

PHOTOGRAPHS: JULIAN GLOVER' DAVID FETTES/GETTY, GUIDO COZZI/4CORNERS, CORBIS

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT, WARNING: ELEPHANTS CROSSING.VICTORIA FALLS. SUNSET, HWANGE NATIONAL PARK. A GIRAFFE JOINS THE HERD AT A WATERING HOLE AT LITTLE MAKALOLO CAMP. AT THE MANA POOLS AIRSTRIP. MATTHEW ABOVE THE ZAMBEZI GORGE, VICTORIA FALLS

CHAOS THREATENED BUT NEVER WON. THIS BRAVE COUNTRY FOUGHT BACK



There's only an hour's time difference, and after a grey London dusk it seemed strange that for the next we watched a crimson African sun all but plummet from the sky. 'It flies up at dawn,' said Peter Allison, who helped show me something of Wilderness Safaris' super-professional camps in Zimbabwe. 'Like toast from a pop-up toaster'.

What a start. After that roaring mile-long curtain of falling water that is the Vic Falls – and here's a wonder of the world that does not disappoint – we were overlooking a little lake at the (tip-top) Victoria Falls Safari Lodge, awaiting a feast of ostrich, kudu steak, Zambezi bream and Windhoek beer, and enjoying a time-honoured African ritual.

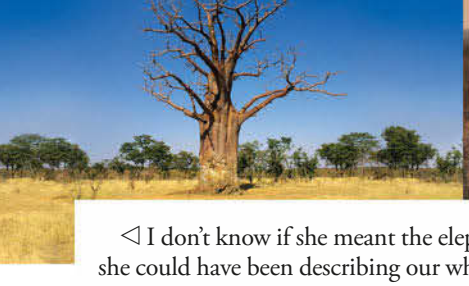
Animals troop in from the bush at sundown and line the waterhole to watch all kinds of humans drinking G&Ts on a veranda. 'Amazing,' I could all but hear a warthog grunt, 'every day they all come at the same time! How do they know? Goodness, there's a rare couple of dun-coloured Englishmen next to those loud-liveried Italians. Sshh! They're very shy.'

There was no time to visit my favourite bar in Africa – at the Gorges Lodge, 20 minutes below the falls and perched 650 feet above the Zambezi boiling in its canyon – for we were off before sunrise in Wilderness's 12-seater Cessna, following the great river east. From 1,000 feet we watched elephants trooping out into Lake Kariba and peered down at the bush, dry and brown before the rains, marking the logic of the game tracks: those ribbons on a map of mammalian intelligence, the geometry of the animal brain.

We were to visit the first of just two of the four camps Wilderness operates in Zimbabwe: Ruckomechi, on the banks of the Zambezi in the Mana Pools National Park. After that, we'd fly to Little Makalolo in the Belgium-sized Hwange National Park.

Bumping down on a dirt airstrip, we picked our way past the elephant dung to a welcome of a hot wind and cold African cider (the new craze across the continent) from one of those ice boxes on little trestle tables with tablecloths that seemed to magic themselves out of Land Rovers wherever we went. And off we bounced to Ruckomechi: a 22-guest camp where lumbered my African lady elephant and elephantine American lady.

'Don't worry,' said Elizabeth, Ruckomechi's deeply impressive manager (she'd told me that 'the job selects you'). 'They're completely relaxed but totally wild.' ▷



◁ I don't know if she meant the elephant or the American, but really she could have been describing our whole adventure. Completely relaxed but totally wild. Completely informal but totally polished. Completely do-as-you-please but totally under control. All under canvas – but what canvas.

There's no space here to diarise the two camps where we stayed. In free association, the impressions tumble:

Dawn and the first flare of sun on the horizon: you know when you twiddle the dimmer switch clockwise? You can actually *see* the light swell.

Advice from Tendai Mdluli, a senior Wilderness manager: 'Don't hurry – there's no rush in Africa: remember that in Africa, food moves.'

Evening meals at Ruckomechi, then that whisky and soda round the fire while hippos wallowed; the hot bath outdoors under the stars; nights under canvas in our huge tent-houses and awaking to hear a distant lion roar; sleeping on a tree platform, frogs chorusing 'Bamboo! Bamboo!' My first leopard, in the headlights.

Watching elephants swimming the Zambezi, trunks up like snorkels, the babies' like mini-snorkels; sitting quietly in a hide at Little Makalolo right by the waterhole as about 200 – yes, 200 – elephants came down to drink in groups, wave after wave in a silent, slow lumber. We were almost under their legs as an enormous bull elephant emptied into his mouth the gurgling contents of his enormous trunk, sucked up from the pool. 'He's about 60,' whispered Tendai.

I was 15 when I last visited Hwange. Since then it has tactfully re-rendered its original name, which was Wankie when we took that happy journey, my mother struggling to get the Humber Super Snipe's steering-column shift into reverse while an elephant lunged, ears flapping.

So our 60-year-old friend was 10 when I was 15.

I wonder if we met. I wonder where his life has taken him, while mine took me through Cambridge, the FCO, Margaret Thatcher's office, Parliament, TV, journalism and radio. There will have been big events in his elephant life too. But as Wittgenstein didn't quite say, 'even if an elephant could speak, we wouldn't understand'.

And still that jumble of impressions... The very different Africa when you land at Little Makalolo, a 14-guest camp in the Hwange Park. The wide skies and flat horizons, the endless open parkland they call savannah.

The horror as a magnificent lion eyed a baby elephant's gnawed carcass and one remaining ear saved for pudding, panting and irritably flicking his tail – 'a voluptuary under the horrors of digestion' – while the vultures waited their turn

Lord, but nature's a nervy business; so much the antithesis of the Buddhist ideal, so very different from the peace, love and harmony with all living things that the green brigade try to believe. Greenpeace? There's no peace. In a week when we saw almost every famous African animal there is, plus some I'd never heard of, I observed only fear, greed, impatience, anger and lust. Waves of panic sweep hourly through those species with reason to be afraid. Among those with nothing to fear, fights are ceaseless as each covets the other's meal, or status, or shady patch, or cow. It makes investment banking seem positively zen.

I'll never forget the walks. Our guide Nyenge, standing by a 20-foot anthill and describing vividly the life of termites – things I never learnt when I lived here for 11 years, dammit. 'In our younger generation in Zimbabwe,' he said, 'people envy to be guides. Our country's exams are the most respected in Africa.' I was glad of that as we ducked into the long grass in a teak forest, downwind of a bull elephant. Ntando, another guide, knew the beast's eyesight was weak and supplemented by smell.

He explained the fear there can be in silence. When birds stop singing and the tropical boubou ceases his one-note creak of an iron gate – always the sound of Africa to me – it is because a predator is near.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, A BAOBAB TREE IN HWANGE NATIONAL PARK. SUNSET AT THE VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI LODGE. LITTLE MAKALOLO CAMP. THE TERRACE AT THE VIC FALLS LODGE

ELEPHANTS COME DOWN TO DRINK – A SILENT, SLOW LUMBER

And he showed us an elephant's footprint. 'She passed here, but not today,' said Ntando. How did he know? 'There is an ant-lion insect's track across the print,' he said, pointing. 'Ant lions only crawl at night.'

I was learning more about the landscape of my boyhood than I ever learned as a boy. What a one-sided view of Africa a white child got, living in the Highlands suburb: the Hampstead of Harare. Why, like the other whites, did I learn hardly a word of the country's African languages? Why did I never ask our servants about their villages, about life in the bush?

And which was the real Zimbabwe? For life in a luxury camp in an exclusive 'concession' in a national park, with more staff than guests, has unrealities of its own. I interviewed some of the staff, and put such questions to them. Should tourists even come here, I asked? Does visiting imply approval of a government?

No, said Elizabeth. 'Some of us built this camp. If nobody visits, our parks will close. We work so hard. We bring schoolchildren from across Zimbabwe to teach them to cherish their land and its wildlife. We are 23 staff, and building Linkwasha [a new camp, open next May] are 35 more workers from villages nearby. Zimbabwe needs us and we need you.' 'We have such good things to tell people,' said Nono, 'it's the people, not the government, who benefit if you come.'

So go. We British have a duty to Zimbabwe. We should reclaim something of this wonderful country, which still bears our imprint. But we should go this time not as occupiers, not as colonists. We should go as travellers – independent or on fantastic trips like mine – as customers, as guests, as visitors. And as friends. ☐

Book it *Africa Travel (africatravel.com; 020 7843 3580) offers two nights, including breakfast, at Victoria Falls Safari Lodge; three nights, full board, at Ruckomechi Camp; and three nights, full board, at Little Makalolo Camp, from £4,175, including flights, transfers, park fees and activities.*

PHOTOGRAPHS: JULIAN GLOVER

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

ONE WOMAN SHOW

I vont to be alone... to hit the streets of hippest Brooklyn and wallow in Parrot Cay perfection. Emma Kennedy travels solo for the very first time – and bloody well loves it

DAY 1

It's an adventure of firsts: stay in Brooklyn, go to the Caribbean and travel on my own, something (other than on the odd trip to Brent Cross) I have never done. This is in every sense a Solo Odyssey of Epic Proportions, so let's spark up the rocket boosters and get on with it.

I've been to New York countless times but have always found myself rattling round Manhattan like a marble in a tin. I've never set foot in Brooklyn. If Manhattan is the five-foot-11 beauty, then Brooklyn is the shorter, dumpier one who's probably a lesbian. What I'm saying is, you may find yourself attracted to Manhattan's obvious long-legged hoo-hah, but it's Brooklyn you should be getting to know: nowhere near as pretty; way more interesting.

I find myself in a swanky apartment in Boerum Hill, available from One Fine Stay (think Airbnb but poshed up). The building is classic New York – an old brownstone with a proper stoop – and inside is massive, with all the mod cons, including not one but FOUR coffee machines. I'm not sure who lives here, but a quick snoop reveals they like classical music, books on Japan and 18th-century prints of formidable ladies. Rather brilliantly, One Fine Stay provides me with an iPhone rammed with its recommendations on everything local I am ever going to need. It's fabulous.

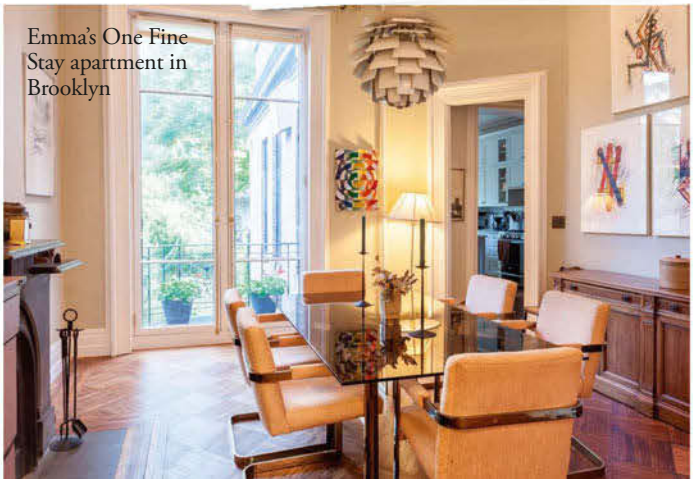
I've arrived late afternoon, too jetlagged to attempt an adventure and so cross-eyed with tiredness that I misread the iPhone and what I think is the only food store nearby turns out to be the equivalent of a fag shop you'd find down an alley in Walthamstow. I come home with an old tin of tuna. Not a good start.

It's getting dark, and I suddenly remember the last time I was in New York. I was tagging along on tour with Alison Moyet, and had this weird moment where I heard a strange voice whispering in her dressing room. And then, next day, I met Alison's fixer, Ray. 'I used to investigate hauntings,' he told us, as if that was the most normal thing in the world. 'But now I book singers on radio shows.'

'Emma felt a ghost at the venue last night,' chipped in Alison. 'Yes,' nodded Ray, 'I saw a dead person hanging round the back curtain.'

So I've remembered that, and I'm on my own in a big old apartment with nobody to talk me down. I get spooked. I hide under the covers.

Emma Kennedy



Emma's One Fine Stay apartment in Brooklyn

DAY 2

I have woken up in a house that's possibly haunted. Whatever, I've got shit to do. I throw on my pedometer. 'I'm walkin' here. I'm walkin' here,' I shout to myself on a loop, as I pace off up the street. A woman carrying a dog stares. I smile back.

Eight miles and one doughnut bigger than a boxer's fist later and a man is waving a baseball cap in my direction. It's Jon Ronson, writer and storyteller extraordinaire, Brooklyn local for the past two years and hell-bent on showing me a 'proper Brooklyn evening'.

'Everything cool happens in Brooklyn,' he whispers, conspiratorially. He fixes me with an intent stare. 'Everything.' He takes me to a restaurant, the Pines. It looks like a charity shop with a menu like a cryptic crossword puzzle. 'Excuse me,' I say to the waiter, 'What's lamb bacon and a garlic scrape?'

'It's bacon made from lamb,' says a man with a haircut I don't understand. 'And chef takes the garlic and...' At this point my ears zone out. It's like someone is explaining the periodic table. 'Yes,' I nod, smiling. 'I'll have one of those.'

Thankfully, it is delicious. Jon takes me to a 'Brooklyn staple' – a recording of a hilarious

BROWNSTONE HOUSES, *LEFT*, AND THE PINES RESTAURANT, *ABOVE*, IN BROOKLYN

ABOVE, JON RONSON IN THE PINES RESTAURANT. *RIGHT & BELOW*, CAFE CULTURE IN WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN

radio show called *Ask Me Another*. The place is packed with hipsters. Both Jon and I are carrying middle-aged writer injuries in our shoulders; there's nowhere to sit so we perch on the stairs. 'I'm in pain,' whispers Jon. 'So am I,' I whisper back. We smile at each other like we've just won the world.

'Thank you for letting me stay in your lovely house,' I mumble to the ghost, upon my return.

DAY 3

I have decided that I haven't walked far enough. Last night, the ghost rattled something at 3am and I clearly wasn't sufficiently exhausted to sleep through it. Today, I am going to walk from Brooklyn to Greenwich Village in Manhattan. A 14-mile round trip.

It's a wonderful walk. I choose the Brooklyn Bridge as my overpass of choice and the views into Manhattan are glorious. I visit the 9/11 Memorial, which I find so beautiful I'm reduced to tears, and I continue up to Greenwich Village, happily getting lost on the way. Thing is, after laidback Brooklyn I find the bustle of its swankier sister a bit overwhelming. I'm glad to get back.

I come home, paper bag filled to bursting with delicious treats from an amazing local organic food store: lemon-drizzled asparagus, broccoli with chilli and parmesan and sensational cajun chicken. Can't wait to tuck into this lot, I think as I open the fridge. I stare inside. There's a jar of batteries in it.

I can only assume it's the ghost. ▷

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, NOAH DEVEREAUX, RICHARD TAYLOR/4 CORNERS

A villa bedroom at Parrot Cay

DAY 4

Phase one over and jetlag dispatched, I'm off to Turks & Caicos. I've never been to the Caribbean and every single person I know hates me. 'Parrot Cay?!' screams musician Tracey Thorn. 'You're going to Parrot Cay?' Yes. Yes I am.

Thing is, I'm not a squillionaire so I don't really know anything about Parrot Cay. I do some digging. It's owned by the mysterious Mrs Ong, one of the world's richest women. Bruce Willis has a home here, as does Donna Karan (you can rent her house out – more on that later) and as far as I can tell, it has its phaser set to Stunning.

I've flown to Providenciales, from where everyone going to Parrot Cay is driven to a departure marina. There are six of us and everyone looks as if they can't believe their luck. We're helped onto the speedboat and off we go, through turquoise waters. This is already the most ridiculously incredible holiday of my life and I haven't even arrived yet.

As we pull up at the resort I turn to everyone. 'We have all made terrible decisions with our lives,' I declare, as I stare out at the glory before us: white sand, palm trees, smiling people waving at us like we're their long-lost children. 'There is now no other purpose in life other than to live here forever.'

Nobody disagrees.

'I'm sorry,' I say, as I am shown to my own house with its own pool and its own beach and its own butler, 'But has there been some kind of mistake?'

No. There has been no mistake. It is a simple fact that I am in Paradise.

The house is incredible: a voluminous indoor sitting room, a four-poster bed, a bath as big as a tank, a delightful veranda complete with sofa – and the view. Good GOD, the view. It's picture perfect. I can't stop laughing. EVERYTHING is gorgeous.

I've got a butler. He's called Hakim. He calls me 'Miss Emma' and within five minutes, we are codependent. I've never had a butler before and it startles me how quickly I become assimilated. 'I finally understand Diana and Paul Burrell,' I tell someone on Twitter, and I mean it.

He brings me my supper, served in front of the ocean. It's a mahimahi curry (fish I've never tried before) and it's utterly delicious. The food here, I am to discover, is fantastic – if you come, have the barbecued lobster tail. After supper I go for a bob in the ocean, which is turquoise, shallow and warm. I float about on my back and wonder what on earth I've done to deserve this. Nothing. That's what.

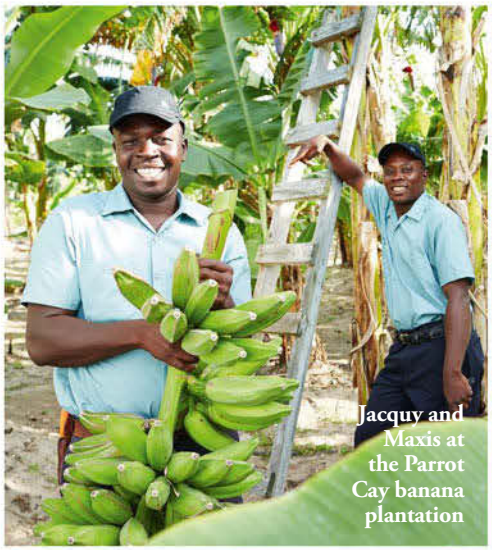
'When do you want breakfast?' Hakim asks me, having diligently looked after my every whim all evening.

'What time do you get up?' I ask.

'That's not how it works, Miss Emma,' says Hakim.

I stare at him. He stares at me. I then launch into a monologue of random times until I see happiness in his eyes. To conclude – 8am.

I love Hakim and want to look after him forever. Which is ironic.



Jacquy and Maxis at the Parrot Cay banana plantation

THE TERRACE AT ONE OF PARROT CAY'S ROCKY POINT VILLAS. *RIGHT,* THE BEACH. *BELOW,* EMMA'S BUTLER HAKIM

'I finally understand Diana and Paul Burrell,' I tell someone on Twitter

DAY 5

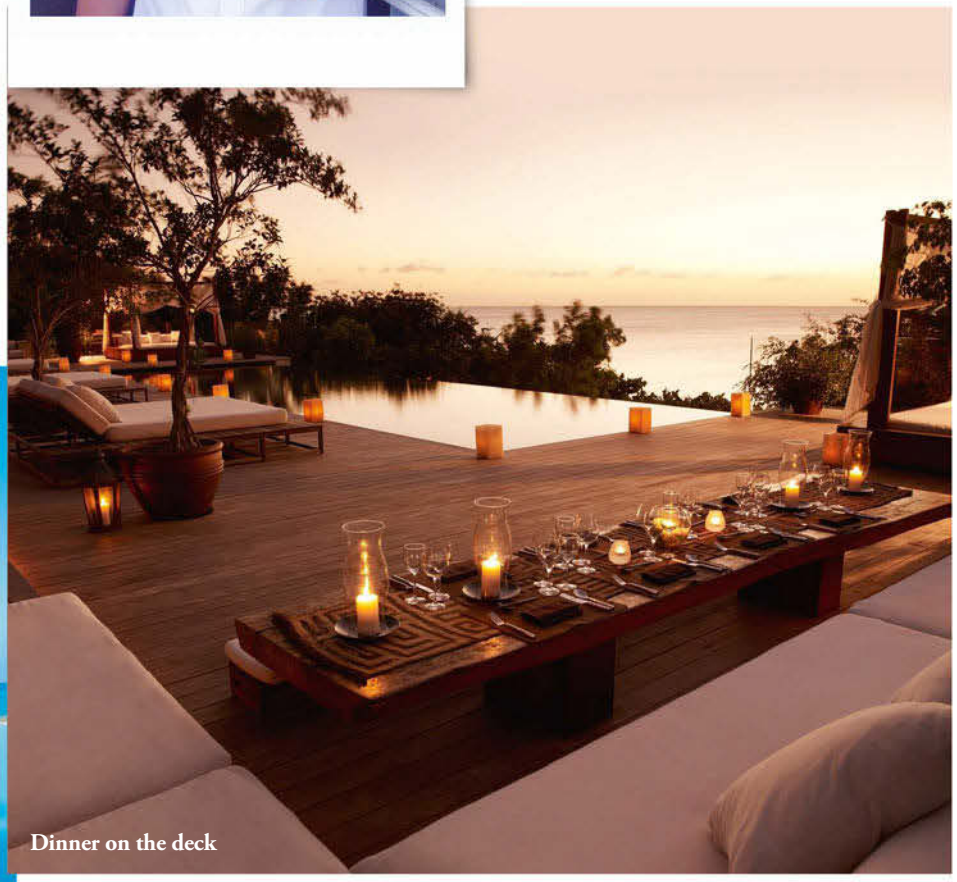
I'm standing in Donna Karan's house. It's the definition of refined: mahogany floors and rooms rammed with Balinese antiques. I keep waiting for someone to leap out, old-fashioned loudhailer in hand, and shout 'CUT!' The whole island is like one great big, impossibly perfect film set.

I walk out of Donna Karan's double doors onto Donna Karan's beach. You can rent her place for (wait for it) £18,700 a night. It comes with four butlers and a chef and can sleep 22. It is THE most perfect space I have ever seen. In short, it's ruined me. I am destroyed by its beauty. DESTROYED.

Later, I find myself on a wander through the banana plantation with Patricia, my guide. I come across a grove of half-grown trees with handpainted signs bearing names underneath. 'Is this where all the celebrities bury their pets?' I ask Patricia. 'No,' she replies, 'They're the names of guests' children.' ▷

PHOTOGRAPHS: MATTHEW WAKEM/GETTY

An infinity pool at Parrot Cay



Dinner on the deck

ABOVE AND RIGHT, DONNA KARAN'S VILLA, THE SANCTUARY. *BELOW*, THE PARROT CAY BOARDWALK

I stare. 'Who've DIED?' I wail.

'No,' replies Patricia, laughing, 'Who have planted a banana tree.'

It's quite something being on a self-contained island resort. Everyone I pass is in a blissed-out state. Having said that, it's quite hard to find people. The island is designed with privacy in mind, so if you're in a house you could go all week without seeing another guest. It's why the island is so popular with A-listers – they can come here and disappear. For the rest of us, there's yoga, pilates, paddleboarding, kayaking and windsurfing. You can go on excursions to beaches to collect pink shells, out to sea in glass-bottomed boats, snorkelling, diving – you name it. And everywhere, you're greeted with smiles and waves. How I'm not permanently weeping with joy, I do not know.

'I have something to tell you, Hakim,' I say, as he drives me home. 'I am never leaving.'

'I'll make up a bunk bed for you in the staff house, Miss Emma,' he says.

I pray he's not joking.

DAY 6

I've just had a COMO Shambhala massage at the spa and I'm now so relaxed my surgeon could have popped in and operated on my shoulder there and then. I float back to my garden house, grinning from ear to ear.

'Are you happy, Miss Emma?' asks Hakim, handing me a towel so I can go and have a swim. I look around me: unbelievable location, luxury off the scale, impeccable service, amazing food, incredible amenities, utter tranquillity. It is, quite simply, the greatest holiday I have ever had. And to top it all off, there's a rainbow out over the sea. I throw my arms into the air. I surrender. 'Yes, Hakim,' I reply. 'I am.' □

Emma's beach house at Parrot Cay

TATLER OFFER

SEVEN NIGHTS AT PARROT CAY BY COMO FROM £1,895, INCLUDING BREAKFAST, FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS AND A THREE-COURSE LUNCH FOR TWO. EXCLUSIVE TO CARRIER (CARRIER.CO.UK; 0161 826 2866). CARRIER OFFERS NEW YORK ONEFINESTAY PROPERTIES FROM £175 PER NIGHT.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, GEORGIE WELLS AND LUCY KINSELLA-MULLEN IN ANSEDONIA, ITALY. JAZZY DE LISSER. DANIELA AGNELLI, JEREMY LANGMEAD & JOANNA CHRISTIE. TAMARA MELLON. JAKE THOMSON AND RORY GUINNESS IN ANSEDONIA, ITALY. NICHOLAS ASHLEY AT GRACE PILKINGTON'S FRENCH WENCH PARTY

I GOT A

…that tonight's gonna be a good, good night guide to the world's top party palaces and

You've got a big birthday coming up and you want to treat yourself. What do you do?
a) Splash out on a new kitchen.
b) Buy an eff-off big diamond (now that you've reached 30/60/90, you damn well deserve one).
c) Fly 200 pals out to Rio for a week-long extravaganza.

Look, we like a nice kitchen. We LOVE diamonds. But the answer has to be c, right? For what can beat a full-on shindig in the sun? Nothing, that's what, which is why it took Rory Guinness, Pandora Sweet and pals all of a millisecond to drop everything and book flights when they got a 'save the date' from Lara Boglione, Aimone Ripa di Meana and Giovanni Mazzei for their animal-themed party in Ansedonia, Italy. Well, you would, wouldn't you? Feasting, frolicking and fun in the sun – plus the odd inappropriate hook-up. No-brainer. Especially as we seem to rather like leaving our inhibitions at the departure gate, don't we?

Like when Grace Pilkington threw a French Wench extravaganza at her family's Normandy farmhouse. Jazzy de Lisser, Adwoa Aboah and a bounty of English delights corseted up and set off for a riotous night of heaving bosoms and grooving to Lord Elcho's band, followed by Bunter, the Marquess of Worcester, rocking out on the mic.

Then there was Fred Lambton's legendary 21st at his father the Earl of Durham's pad, Villa Cetinale, near Siena – now available for private hire for the first time. It had dancing through the night, and elephants who might also have been dancing through the night and Kate Moss, rumoured to be in nipple tassels, who was *certainly* dancing through the night – and then there followed a two-day afterparty at Amber Guinness's place nearby.

Or Mick Jagger's 60th in St Petersburg, where 100 guests met for a circus-themed bash in the gilded glory of the Yusupov Palace, with violinists performing on huge globes, and gymnasts and ballerinas and musicians playing Debussy. And Fran Cutler's wild Florentine party, with Jaime Winstone, Dave Gardner and Kate Moss (with more than just her nipples covered this time) having a grand old time on the wide terraces of the Hotel Il Salviatino.

The properly moneyed set were at Nat Rothschild's 40th in Porto Montenegro – 300 chums jetting or superyachting in for a three- day Disco Soirée. The guest list: Lord Mandelson, Eddie Jordan, Peter Munk, Niall Ferguson, Tamara Mellon, Novak Djokovic and a bevy of Agnellis, all boogying around the infinity pool overlooking the sea.

So, no, not your average dinner dance in a marquee in Hampshire. But these aren't mere 'parties'. These are 'celebrations' – ones to create yourself with our pick of the best party houses, *opposite page*, or have curated with the help of Britain's top fixers. They'll whizz up something that you'll cherish long after the chafing has healed, the elephants have gone home and the tassels are lost at the bottom of the pool. Whoever had that much fun with a diamond? **BOOK IT** VILLA CETINALE (VILLACETINALE.COM; 00 39 0577 311147) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS, FROM £27,630, INCLUDING CHEF AND STAFF.

FEELING...

– the best of your life, in fact, with the ultimate Tatler fun-fixers. By Francisca Kellett and Tibbs Jenkins

BINICALAF AT DUSK; *BELOW*, JEANNE MOREAU IN CANNES IN 1958

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE, GRACE PILKINGTON & AMBER GUINNESS IN NORMANDY. DAISY WALKER AND TATJANA VON STEIN IN ANSEDONIA. FRAN CUTLER AT HOTEL IL SALVIATINO, FLORENCE, WITH DAVE GARDNER AND KATE MOSS. DAVE HANBURY IN ANSEDONIA

PHOTOGRAPHS: REX FEATURES, CAMERA PRESS, PHOTOSHOOT, NICHOLAS ASHLEY, WENN, STARSTOCK

Houses of fun

FAMILY FIESTA

Binicalaf is the best family villa in the Balearics. Bold statement, but here's why. You get to the gate, ramble through 300 acres of amazing countryside, then go through the 200-year-old finca and – BAM! – lush lawns stretching to sparkling seas. There are 10 rooms with freestanding baths and a vine-covered pergola festooned with lights for evening feasts, *above*. There's a clifftop table for sundowners and a spring-fed plunge pool. A cinema screen gets whipped up for films beneath the stars. A private rocky cove comes with a traditional Menorcan fishing boat (and boatman), and there's an opera-singing chef called Pepe (yes, really). Best. Villa. Ever. **BOOK IT** RED SAVANNAH (REDSAVANNAH.COM; 01242 787800) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS, FROM £10,355.

GO WILD IN THE VELD

You don't have to leave the estate to see game at Singita Castleton, a Sabi Sands homestead with six cottages bordering the Kruger National Park in South Africa. There's a waterhole RIGHT THERE – so if lying still in the shade with a Bloody Mary is essential after the night before, you can do just that, but without missing a thing. Or bump out into the wilderness with a guide, breakfast in a dry riverbed, have lantern-lit parties and generally behave like the king of the jungle. **BOOK IT** SINGITA (SINGITA.COM; 00 27 13 735 5471) OFFERS EXCLUSIVE USE FOR £3,950 A NIGHT, ALL INCLUSIVE.

LA VIE EN ROSE

Want a St Trop party pad, but also fancy a bit of pedigree, a bit of class? Enter Le Preverger, erstwhile holiday home of Jeanne Moreau and then Laura Ashley, and recently zizzed up by Nicky Haslam: 150 acres of hills, 18 bedrooms, reception rooms stuffed with books and fireplaces big enough to roast a pony. You're in good company – past guests include Picasso and Diana, Princess of Wales, and Johnny Depp, *right*, is your neighbour. **BOOK IT** LEPREVERGER.COM. PRICE ON APPLICATION.

MONARCH OF THE GLEN

You want remote? Try this 43,000-acre estate on the shore of the Minch sea. You want private? Climb one, two, heck FIVE mountains without seeing another soul – nothing but you and swooping eagles and regal stags. Eishken Lodge is grand but cosy, with 12 bedrooms, four drawing rooms and grounds galore, including a jetty from where you can water-ski or kayak (in a wetsuit, obvs). And there's every country pursuit known to man: stalking, fishing, shooting. ▷

RIGHT, LE PREVERGER, ST TROPEZ. *LEFT*, PICNICS AND WATERSKIING AT EISHKEN LODGE

◁ But what sets it head and shoulders above the rest is the food: feasts of just-plucked-from-the-sea lobster, saddles of venison the size of poodles, five different cakes at tea. You'll gorge yourself, but you'll work it all off the next day, won't you? Course you will. **BOOK IT** EISHKEN LODGE (EISHKEN.COM; 020 7600 7900) OFFERS SEVEN NIGHTS ALL INCLUSIVE, FROM £10,000.

BALINESE BASH

Chopper-drop into Soori, a Balinese dream of a private estate, which is, somehow, impossible to pap – so those not fond of zoom lenses will be happy. It's surrounded by volcanic-sand beaches, rice paddies and forests, and the 10 super-zen rooms create a very take-off-your-shoes-for-the-week vibe. The huge terrace is just the place to plonk a DJ for the week (it's been known to happen), and food is a major distraction: Heston Blumenthal apparently wouldn't shut up about the slow-cooked black rock chicken. **BOOK IT** CLEVELAND COLLECTION (CLEVELANDCOLLECTION.CO.UK; 020 7843 3531) OFFERS ONE NIGHT, FROM £6,610.

BELOW, THE JACUZZI ON BOARD *SHERAKHAN*

On the move

HIT THE HIGH SEAS

Chartering a yacht is pretty much a celebration in itself, but for the ultimate, no-expense-spared life-changer, go for the enormous *Sherakhan*. Bring 26 mates to swan around the decks, behave ridiculously with all the water toys – jet skis, scuba gear, floating trampolines – and party the week away. AND there is a crew of 19. Told you she was enormous. **BOOK IT** Y.CO (Y.CO; 020 7584 1801) OFFERS ONE WEEK FROM £215,000.

LOVE TRAIN

Come over all Poirot (without the grisly murder) and take over the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. That's right, the WHOLE train – for 120 of your nearest and dearest – which you board in Paris and then chug-a-chug through the French countryside, rolling into Venice the next evening. There is champagne on tap, a glorious bar with a pianist (who has been resident for 20 years, so he knows what he's doing), a four-course dinner in the restaurant car, and sumptuous restored Twenties art-deco cabins to collapse into. Dress up, otherwise you'll look daft among all that gleaming brass and wood. **BOOK IT** BELMOND (BELMOND.COM; 020 3117 1300) OFFERS PARIS TO VENICE, FOR 120 PEOPLE, FROM £210,000.

Ultimate party fixers

DREAMSMITH

This new offshoot of travel pros Cazenove+Loyd organises flamboyantly fabulous custom-made shindigs around the globe. Each is utterly different, but a popular destination is Marrakesh and a party might involve flying over 50 pals in a private jet for a three-night extravaganza. Dreamsmith can arrange everything – prices start from around £250,000 – from theming the plane and flight attendants and reprogramming the on-board entertainment to putting presents and rainbow-hued djellabas in rooms every night, or building a pop-up nightclub in the desert, complete with fire-jugglers and drummers. And they might construct a mini Berber village in the Atlas mountains, to which guests hike or bike, or find a Moroccan banquet with local performers and singers. Another idea might be a week in Rajasthan, jetting in 100 friends and travelling between bejewelled palaces, dining in mindblowing locations – Udaipur's Taj Lake Palace or the ramparts of Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort, say. One night might be spent trooping into the Thar Desert on camel carts, to a caravan complete with open-air fires, spit-roasting, soothsayers and musicians. Another could involve a round of elephant polo or a tour of Jaipur in vintage cars. See? *Everything*. **BOOK IT** DREAMSMITHEVENTS.COM; 020 7384 8910.

BY WORD OF MOUTH

Get these guys on speed-dial. They're top of the pops when it comes to creating dazzling feasts for any party, anywhere. They do all of Sir Philip Green's blowout birthdays and, more importantly, the *Tatler* parties. You're in safe hands. **BOOK IT** BYWORDOFMOUTH.CO.UK; 020 8871 9566.

RIGHT, TATLER'S 300TH-ANNIVERSARY PARTY AT LANCASTER HOUSE

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE, CAZENOVE+LOYD PARTY, MARRAKESH. GOLDEN ODYSSEY BY BASED ON A TRUE STORY. LILLINGSTON'S ELVIS BASH. THE CLOONEYS' VENICE NUPTIALS. A WEDDING IN FLORENCE BY EUROPEAN EVENT ORGANISATION. *BOTTOM*, JEMIMA KHAN. SIR MICK JAGGER

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

There comes a time in every girl's life where what she really wants is to be whisked off by private jet to Indonesia, to island-hop by superyacht, to be ber-luxurious suite every night – to have, in short, the ultimate can't-be-beat honeymoon. Based On A True Story will arrange just that. They curate the most incredible (and bonkers) travel experiences on the planet, such as the two-week Golden Odyssey, where a 100-strong theatre troupe acted out ancient Greek myths; the client's children overcame Spartans, Medusa, the Cyclops, the Minotaur and a fire-breathing Scylla, before discovering a hoard of gold. Or the Scandinavian Fairy Tale, with actors spinning a country-hopping yarn complete with trolls, Vikings and elves (and, yes, superyachts). Billionaires only need apply. **BOOK IT** BASEDONATRUESTORY.CO.UK; 0789 999 8551.

ATOM EVENTS

Tom Freud is delightful, and jolly clever too. Jemima Khan is a fan, as is Tom's cousin, Matthew. Any party, anywhere. **BOOK IT** ATOMEVENTS.COM; 020 7437 0100.

LANZA & BAUCINA

These guys are so discreet, so very, very private, that they won't even HINT at what they can organise. But rest assured that they do extraordinary. Just to give you an idea, they organised a certain wedding in Venice last summer. Nuff said. **BOOK IT** LANZABAUCINA.COM; 020 7738 2222.

EUROPEAN EVENT ORGANISATION

Jeremy Garson is another private pro, and he runs a truly access-all-areas team. One recent party was a weekend wedding anniversary in Florence, which included everything from a scavenger hunt/quiz through the city, to a tennis tournament complete with engraved cups, to a dinner in the client's private olive grove lit with hanging candles and dancing in an elegant canvas marquee. They will take your idea and run with it, magicking it into a *La Dolce Vita* dream. **BOOK IT** EUROPEANEVENTORGANISATION.COM; 07802 751719.

ALS PRIVATE

Off-piste insider Annabel Seel is who you want for mountain frolics. Tight on time? ALS can organise a one-day heli-skiing party (from £60,000 for six), jetting to the Alps, helicoptering to the best snow, then whooshing down virgin powder with Olympic champion Chemmy Alcott. Lunch is served at the very top of a very deserted mountain, cooked up by a celebrity chef (they won't tell us who) and serenaded by a celeb singer (ditto), and then you get flown back for dinner at Mayfair private members' club 5 Hertford Street, followed by a boogie at Loulou's. Surreal and sensational. **BOOK IT** ALSPRIVATE.COM; 020 3750 0234.

KVK

Valery Katsuba, Princess Katya Galitzine and Katharina Flohr are the in-the-know whizzes to call for all things Russian. Sir Mick Jagger did. **BOOK IT** KATSUBA.NET.

LILLINGSTON

Sophie Lillingston's team have planned bashes all over the world, from an adrenalin-fuelled treasure hunt in Hong Kong and Saigon, to a flamboyant party in St Tropez. Award for most fun party EVER must go to a bespoke Las Vegas and Montana trip, which started with gambling lessons and an Elvis night (with costumes and wigs for all), followed by a private-jet hop to Montana for a wide-skies horseback adventure: mountaintop lunches, barn dances, campfires and s'mores, and goodie bags that included proper cowboy belts and hats. FUN. **BOOK IT** LILLINGSTON.CO.UK; 020 7221 5820.

QUINTESSENTIALLY EVENTS

Caroline Hurley knows how to throw a party, especially a themed one. There was the Studio 54 event, which took over an entire island in the Maldives, and the Buddha Bar-inspired shindig in Cap Ferrat. Our favourite: a 200-strong *Great Gatsby*-inspired birthday blast in a huge St Tropez villa, with elaborate costumes, a pool party (as in the film; the mind boggles), swing bands and Twenties dancers – and then DJ Philly was flown in for all-night dancing. Sign us up, please. **BOOK IT** QUINTESSENTIALLYEVENTS.COM; 020 7760 2310.

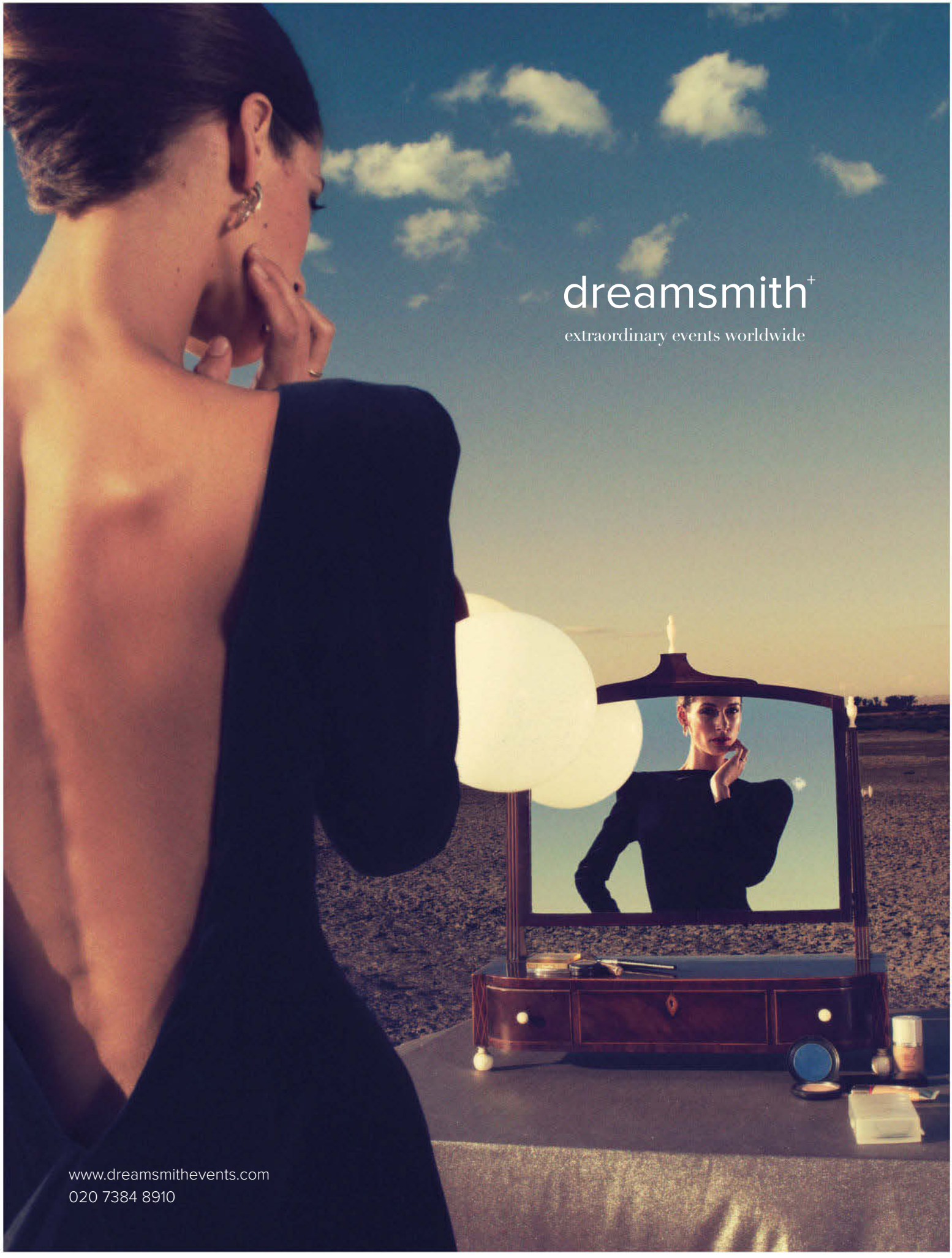
THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON

The Admirable Crichton is all about discretion, but can whizz up just about anything. Details are top secret and shhhhhh. **BOOK IT** ADMIRABLE-CRICHTON.CO.UK; 020 7326 3800.

FAIT ACCOMPLI

Looking for the ultimate surprise party? Try this: 50 guests for a 50th birthday in Rio de Janeiro. Fait Accompli will custom-make any celebration, but for this they flew in the birthday boy privately with his family (with the plane's moving map disabled), blindfolded him through Rio airport and took him to the pool terrace of the Fasano, to reveal his location – and all his pals. There followed two days' partying at the carnival, a helicopter hop to Paraty and Brazilian-style lounging in Angra dos Reis, finishing with a final, blowout bash. **BOOK IT** FAITACCOMPLI.CO.UK; 020 7352 2777. □

PHOTOGRAPHS: HUGO BURNAND, PACIFIC COAST NEWS, SPLASH NEWS, CAPITAL PICTURES, ALAN DAVIDSON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It List

by MARIELLA TANDY

FACE FIRST

There's a lot to be said for a jolly good cleanser – something natural skincare wizard **ESPA** knows all about. This Optimal Skin Pro Cleanser, £30, is packed full of wondrous ingredients that will do things like take your make-up off without you having to scrub the least little bit, and then leave your skin so clean you could eat your supper off it. Prepare to spend a lot of time stroking your own face – that's what baby-soft skin will do for you. *espaskincare.com*

It's very simple. These Prada sunglasses, £415, are completely sensational and you need a pair, so stop what you're doing and go and get some. Now. davidclulow.com

SAIL IN SEA MINOR

You know how it is. There you are, lolling about on your yacht, which is fine, but oh, if only you didn't feel like something was missing... you really do need a playlist. Step forward, new Y.PLAY service from charter company **Y.CO**, which gives every client a personalised music library curated for them on a pre-loaded iPod. Problem solved. *y.co*

NEW DEPARTURE

Prepare to hyperventilate – Louis Vuitton has just opened a store in the magical kingdom that is Heathrow Terminal 5. Roll around on its shiny new floor to express your love and then buy something fabulous like this leather beauty case, £5,800. *louisvuitton.com*

ALL CLEAR

Be honest – are you riddled with toxins? If you have any kind of life, the answer is obviously yes, so stop fretting and scuttle along to the brand new **Viva Mayr** Clinic in Altaussee, Austria. They'll address everything from food intolerances to general burnout, all with this perfect lake in the background. You'll leave springier than a daffodil having a VERY good day. *viva-mayr.com*

POLES AHEAD

And now for something completely different. Book a **Seabourn** cruise to the Antarctic, from £10,505, and spend 21 days feasting your eyes on some of the most extraordinary scenery in the world. The company does trips in a Zodiac at every stop too, so you can get right in amongst it and have your mind blown by how romantic and miraculous the natural world is. *seabourn.com*

AIN'T IT GRAND

Nirvana does exist – and it's only 40 minutes from Delhi. Yup, the **ITC Grand Bharat** is about to become your new favourite retreat. Set in the Aravalli hills in 300 gorgeous acres, this heavenly haven is the epitome of everything that makes India incredible – plus it's even got a golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus. Dreamy. *itchotels.in*

PHOTOGRAPH: LOUIE PSIHOYOS

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PHOTOGRAPH: LISA LIMER/GALLERY STOCK

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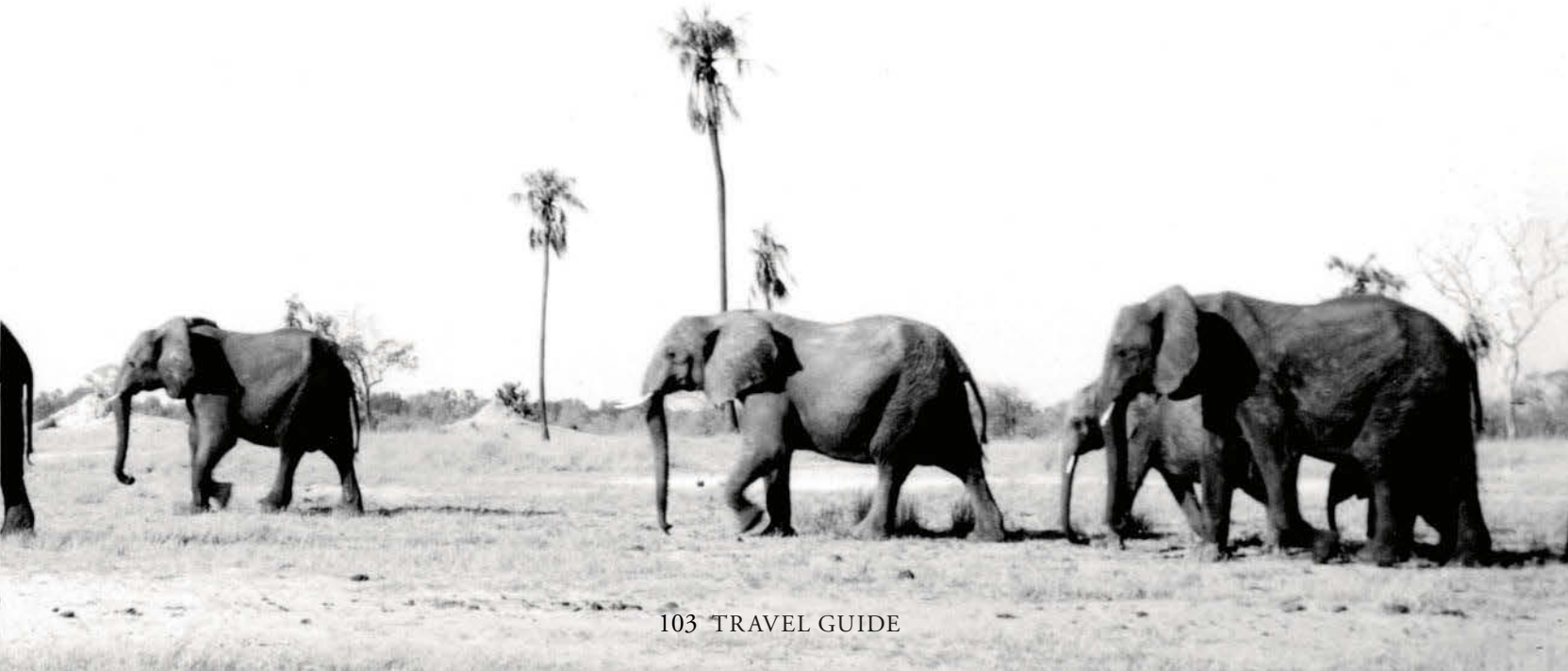

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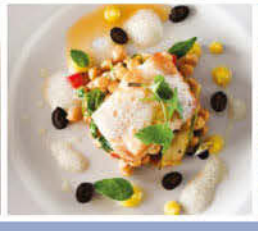

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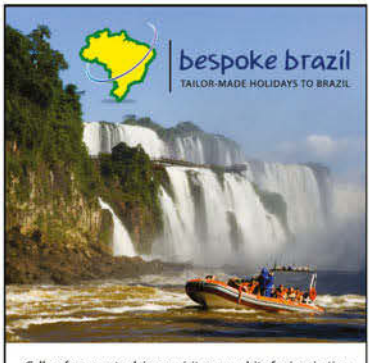

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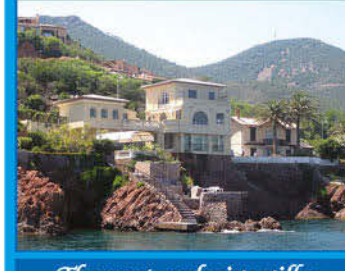

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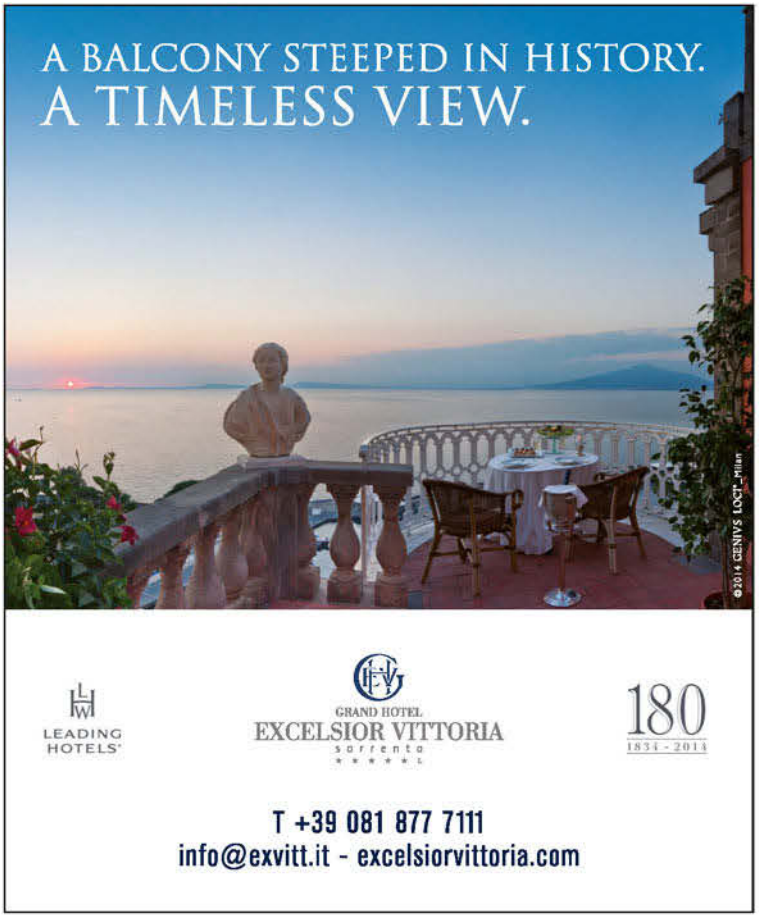

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WUNDERBAR!

Let's not be beastly to the Germans – after all, our royal houses have been linked for 300 years. Here are 10 reasons to love them

1 THEIR ROYALS ARE POSHER

The Hohenzollerns were the rulers of mighty Brandenburg before becoming emperors of Germany, whereas our royals are descended from the Welfs of puny Hanover. In 1866 Prussia simply annexed Hanover, and that was that. So, really, we are the poor relations.

2 THEIR NAMES ARE LONGER

You think Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe is a mouthful? Ha! Try the name of the current Welfen heir for size (not a Hohenzollern, but still). So, deep breath: Ernst August Albert Paul Otto Rupprecht Oskar Berthold Friedrich-Ferdinand Christian-Ludwig. He likes to keep things simple, though, with Prinz von Hannover, or Herzog zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg. Most people just call him Mr Princess Caroline of Monaco.

3 THEY HAVE THE BEST CASTLES

Schloss Neuschwanstein, built by Mad King Ludwig, is what the actual Disney castle is actually based on. Doesn't get any better than that in our book. Ludwig's other big hitter, Nymphenburg, is still home to his descendant – Franz, Duke of Bavaria, also a successor of the Scottish Stuarts and hailed by Jacobites as King Francis II of England, Scotland, Ireland and France. See? Proper pedigree.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BOB WILSON/PHOSPHOR ART

4 THEY INVENTED CLASSICAL MUSIC

Well, sort of. All the big names are German – Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner – or are German-speaking, like Mozart and Mahler. Let's face it, even Britain's finest opera composer, Handel, was German.

5 ...AND THEY'RE CLEVER

Goethe and Schiller, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche – some of the greatest thinkers, and all German. So was Karl Marx, and half the people you've never heard of in Monty Python's 'The Philosopher's Drinking Song'. Even their novelists (Thomas Mann, Günter Grass) can't just tell a story; they have to make it *deep*.

6 THEIR ARISTOCRACY IS FUNNIER

All German titles were abolished in 1918 but that didn't stop posh-punk-cum-St Moritz-waitress Mariae Gloria Ferdinanda Joachima Josefine Wilhelmine Huberta marrying the playboy Johannes, Prince of Thurn and Taxis, and letting it be known that henceforth she should be addressed only as 'Prinzessin'.

7 THEY HAVE DECENT WINES TOO

For years we didn't realise that Liebfraumilch and Blue Nun were made only for export (and to give us vicious hangovers). Real German wine, such as Spätburgunder and Riesling, is very good. And now everyone's finally learned how to pronounce Spätlese, we're laughing all the way to the bottle bank.

8 THEY EAT BETTER

German baked goods are a marvellous reason to pile on the pounds. This is the country that inserted a whole extra meal into its day at 3pm (*kaffee und kuchen* – coffee and cake with lashings of cream; so much more substantial than afternoon tea), produces 300 different kinds of bread and invented *lebkuchen* (gingerbread).

9 THEY HAVE ACTUAL SKI SLOPES

A large proportion of Germans can get in the car and be yodelling down the pistes an hour or so later, while the best we can do is to haul ourselves up to Aviemore for a light dusting on the rocky slopes.

10 THEY DREAMED UP CHRISTMAS

Pretty much every Christmas tradition you can think of – with the exception of Morecambe & Wise – is originally German. They also cooked up Krampus, Father Christmas's scary assistant, who goes around whacking badly behaved kids. How did we miss out on that one?

Fine Drinking.

(Pictured Cocktail: Sunraysia Cosmopolitan, mix it from your hotel minibar.)

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